

**CHRISTIANITY
VINDICATED
BY ITS ENEMIES**

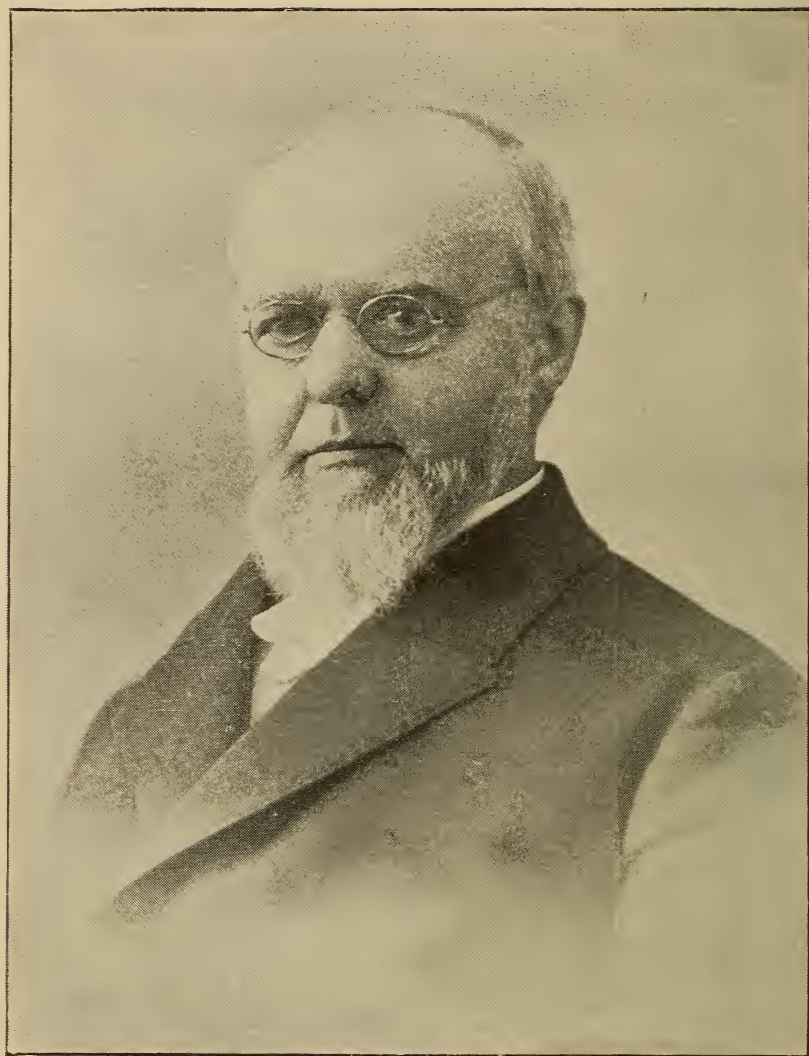
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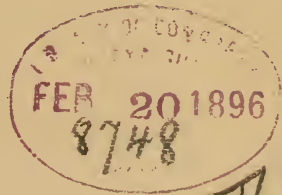
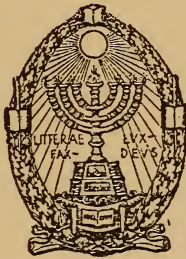


Daniel Dorchester

CHRISTIANITY VINDICATED BY ITS ENEMIES

"Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves
being judges."—DEUT. xxxii, 31

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BY DANIEL DORCHESTER, D.D.

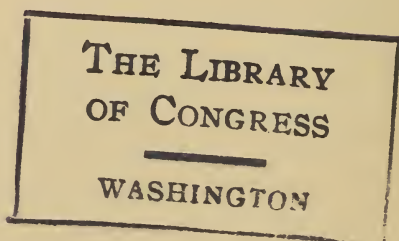


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PREFACE.

IT is the thought and hope of the author that this little book, presenting a subject of vast scope and importance in a very condensed form, will meet a popular demand and prove helpful to many minds, especially the young, who are often brought in contact with various forms of skepticism. The argument of the book being strongly cumulative, the last chapters should be closely studied.

DANIEL DORCHESTER.

MELROSE, MASS., *January 1, 1896.*

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INTRODUCTION.

WHETHER infidelity is of the head or of the heart is a much-mooted question. Some contend it is of the head—that men are made skeptics by real difficulties inhering in the system of Christianity, or by habits of speculation which involve them in imaginary difficulties. Others think infidelity springs out of the heart, from the passions, which cannot endure the restraints and rebukes of the Holy Scriptures, but clamor for undisturbed indulgence—that men profess to be infidels because they wish the Christian religion untrue, rather than because they believe it is untrue.

There is doubtless some truth in both of these views. Infidelity is both of the head and of the heart. Often largely speculative, nevertheless its mainspring is doubtless a perversity in human nature—its alienation from God.

But men possess moral natures, with moral intuitions, under the influence of which they sometimes utter better views than they have at other times expressed, betraying the real

convictions of their hearts. In some of these better moods doubters of every class have made the most remarkable acknowledgments in favor of the Christian religion, which, in the presence of their associates in unbelief, they had ridiculed and denounced.

It is a well-attested truth that, sooner or later, all that is in a man's heart will find an outward expression. It only requires a change of influences, circumstances, or motives to bring out all that is in man. In the more candid and reflective moments, the real religious belief finds utterance. What is then said is of far greater value than what is spoken in moments of hilarity, or when puzzled by speculation, or flattered by applause, or maddened by controversy.

Acknowledgments made in these better moods go far to corroborate the truth of the Christian religion, and show how illusory and vain are the hopes of unbelievers ; while Christianity stands like a rock, unmoved in every trial, the ultimate sure refuge of all—even of its enemies. The motto, therefore, of this discussion is, "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."

Skeptics, in their worst moods, have said so much against Christianity that it is only fair to see what they have said in their better

moods in favor of the Christian religion. Certainly what they have said in these better conditions of mind must be of the greatest value. Those who have never examined this phase will be surprised to find how far these better utterances will go toward vindicating Christianity. The method of argument, then, in this book will be somewhat novel.

The large quantities of arguments and facts which might be adduced from the Christian side of the case will be carefully avoided. All the proofs and testimonies used shall be furnished by the enemies of Christianity, or at least by men standing outside of it and uncommitted to it. Passing over upon the ground occupied by our adversaries, we propose, out of the admissions they have made in their more candid moods, to gather materials with which to vindicate Christianity.

Virgil, in one of his beautiful Eclogues (iv, verse 58), speaking of a contest for preeminence in song, says:

“Should Pan contend with me, were even Arcadia judge, Pan would acknowledge himself to be vanquished, Arcadia herself being judge.”

So, in this discussion, skeptics and men of the world, standing outside of Christianity, shall be the judges, and their constrained acknowledgments shall decide the question.

God and Immortality.

CHRISTIANITY VINDICATED BY ITS ENEMIES.

CHAPTER I.

GOD AND IMMORTALITY.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago the trend of scientific thought in relation to the questions of God and immortality was toward materialism. That there has been a change since that time is a common confession.

Let us look at acknowledgments made by scientific skeptics in both of these periods touching these great questions.

In the former period it was commonly declared that these were "open questions," matters of grave uncertainty, and, if ever determined, it must be done by purely scientific methods, by processes of argument grounded in irrefragable axioms.

Mr. F. E. Abbot, of Cambridge, Mass., at one time editor of *The Index*, was an accepted representative of the scientific school of thinkers. He was a gentleman of high culture, per-

sonally very estimable, and of high character. In a course of lectures by prominent men in Horticultural Hall, Boston, in 1872, he boldly undertook the task of determining the questions of God and immortality. He first showed to his own satisfaction the grave defects of the intuitional school of thought. He declared its methods as simply a series of assumptions and self-asseverations, "a Barmecide feast," utterly unscientific, and consequently to be set aside in this age of pure scientific investigation.

He then said,* "The eyes of mankind are riveted with infinite yearning upon the youthful figure of Science," and inquired, "What, then, is the real attitude of Science toward the ideas of God and immortality?"

We flatter ourselves that now we shall tread on sure foundations, something better than "empty asseverations." We shall no longer "chew the air and go away famishing. Science is to satisfy the hungry soul of humanity. Hope," he says, "has been long deferred, and under the inspiration of flattering promises our expectations are high. Millions hang breathless upon his most trivial word."

But how great is to be our disappointment! We are ready and waiting to be led, under

* I quote from Mr. Abbot's own published account of his lecture.

skillful guidance, to inspect the strongholds of the scientific school of doubters, the unbelievers expounding their own system. But what do we meet? At the very outset we have a weak confession, and others soon follow :

CONFESSION I. "It must be confessed, I think, that this stripling, Science, lets fall much nonsense. He is still, in the one pungent phrase of the *Country Parson*, "in the vealy stage," somewhat elated by the attention he receives, somewhat given to flippant and pert speech, somewhat too eager to show his disrespect for venerable ideas, whose depth he has by no means fathomed. Science is, nevertheless, destined to be the world's true Messiah ; but at present he is bent on sowing his wild oats to his heart's content."

So then, in the year of the world, according to the short chronology of Usher, 5900, and according to the longer chronology of Mr. J. Vela Blake,* 11,001,830, Science is "youthful," "in the vealy stage," "flippant," "pert," and "sowing his wild oats." Nevertheless, we are told that in such frisky hands are held the scales in which are to be weighed our faith in God and immortality.

CONFESSION II. Mr. Abbot proceeds : "Nothing can be regarded as the assured and ultimate word of science, on any subject, so long as the scientific world are divided in opinion concerning it ; and even when the scientific

* *Radical*, January, 1872.

world are agreed it by no means follows that new discoveries may not require new modifications of accepted opinion ; for science is ever increasing, without any limits which can be assigned."

Under the dispensation of science, then, the answer to these momentous questions is still delayed and indefinitely postponed.

CONFESSION III. He says : " The present attitude of science toward the ideas of God and immortality is that of pure indifference. These questions are daily ignored by science and impatiently thrust aside, as interlopers in the province of scientific research. Scientific men turn their backs on religion with manifest irritability, because science is now busy with other cares, laying the foundations of a great future edifice."

Having been told that the two systems of revelation, the written and the intuitional, have failed, that the day of authority and self-asseveration have passed, and that Science is now our only hope, we respectfully entered her apartments, introduced our inquiries, accepted her method of induction and deduction, but we were thrust aside as " interlopers " and superciliously bowed out of her presence with the plain assertion that she is now engrossed with other matters. We press the inquiry, What, then, can humanity do ?

CONFESSION IV. " A school of thinkers is gradually forming, devoted to the investigation of the highest

problems. Within a few years such phrases as "the scientific study of theology," "the science of religion," etc., have become somewhat familiar to the public ear. What is called "comparative religion" . . . is claiming a fitting place in the sisterhood of sciences. Scholars of the highest eminence have pursued and are pursuing these investigations in the most strictly scientific spirit. . . . Their labors, however, are as yet bestowed mainly upon the more superficial phenomena. . . . They propose to extend their studies to the ideas of God, of immortality, of duty, embracing everything that has passed under the name of religion, and subjecting it to the severest tests."

And so, after these thousands of years, it is confessed that science is yet in its infancy. A few men have just gone into the forest to select timber for the edifice, and the process must be slow, for only the choicest material will answer. Only wait a few thousand years more; that will not be long; and then perhaps our patience will be rewarded, and possibly we may know something.

CONFESSION V. Again he speaks: "The plain fact is this: scientific men, no less than men of the world, are divided in opinion on the profound questions of God and immortality. . . . It is time to look facts squarely in the face, and drop all euphemistic disguises, as to their purport. The progress of physical science has called the faith of mankind in God and immortality into grave and most painful doubt. This is the naked, unvarnished truth."

If this is so, then, according to these confessions, under the guidance of science humanity must prosecute her inquiries with prospects increasingly dubious.

CONFESSION VI. Mr. Abbot says: "Doubt is born of physical science;" "but physical science is not all; the appeal is to universal science. By the verdict of universal science we must abide; bring the case before the court."

We may accept Mr. Abbot's method, that we may see what can be done by his own processes. Let the jury then be impaneled. Let the witnesses be produced, sworn, and closely questioned. But let us pause a moment before we proceed. That we may make due provision let us know whether the case will be long or short. Let us see. What a cloud of witnesses, according to Mr. Abbot, universal science proposes to summon! What an array, too, of the most acute counselors! Evidently the case will be very protracted. Nothing less than a succession of judges, longer than the lists of the Pharaohs or the dynasties of the Chinese kings will suffice.

What is the bill, as drawn up by this distinguished advocate of the scientific method? He says that universal science must demonstrate the following points:

1. "A universal causative power," that is, throughout the whole realm of nature.

2. "The intelligible unity of nature, in all her departments," animate and inanimate, vegetable and mineral, seas, skies, life, death, air, vapors, gases, storms, tornadoes, diseases, famines, pestilences, etc.

3. "The creative ideas in organic development," beyond the questionings of Darwin, Huxley, and their fellows.

4. "The moral sentiment in man, the religious affections, the spiritual instincts, sensibilities, and aspirations, the ideal hopes and struggles," must all be carefully analyzed among all nations and tribes and in different ages of the world.

5. "The conscious freedom of the human soul must be considered as a part of nature," and it must be demonstrated under the cross-examination of fatalism, pantheism, and materialism, with Mill, Spencer, Emerson, and their successors as attorneys.

6. "The critical study of all the sacred writings and the history and institutions of all the great religions of the world,

7. "Extending and enlarging the common conception of experience, so that it shall take in the entirety of human consciousness, as well as the mere contact of his consciousness with the outer world, and thus including whatever of mental phenomena the word intuition really

stands for," and at the same time discriminating against "transcendental affirmatives outside of possible experience," etc.

8. And science must also invade "the fields which have hitherto been surrendered to the Church, as if beyond its own proper province," and it must "insist that all the facts of consciousness shall be included in the universal realm of science, and regarded as truly the phenomena for scientific study, as the relations of number and quantity, the process of chemical combination, the fungoid origin of cholera, the origin of species, or the bright and dark lines in the solar and stellar spectra."

These are the principal points in the bill.

Four rules of law are laid down to be observed in the investigation :

1. "The real facts are to be scientifically studied and interpreted, and the solution must be approached by one universal method, the union of induction and deduction, resting on a basis of observed facts and leading to veritable results."

2. He allows "the liberty to frame provisional scientific hypotheses, such as the influence of dust on disease, the phenomena of fertilization, the results of deep-sea dredgings, the photosphere, the cosmosphere, and the corona of the sun."

3. We are told that "nothing will serve as foundation for a truly universal science but the totality of all phenomena."

4. "Each individual must work out for himself his private convictions, in the pure spirit of truth, in unflinching adherence to the laws of thought," and then, after each individual of the race shall have reached his conclusions, "the united concurring opinion of 'mankind' is to be pronounced as the final verdict."

Such is the case before the court. The case has been called, the law has been laid down. It is exceedingly broad. The witnesses are legion. Let the trial proceed.

But at the outset we encounter practical difficulties, for who will live long enough to gather all the testimony and to form the judgment?

We cannot afford to lose time in inaction. The case must be opened and pushed as rapidly as possible.

But at once we are met by another confession:

CONFESSION VII. Mr. Abbot says: "Gentlemen, I think it should be mentioned at the outset that there is a large number of witnesses which are not yet ready to testify.

"Sociology, psychology, ethics, and the allied branches are scarcely capable as yet of a scientific treatment. Still less can we expect that branches higher still, involving the intricate questions of philosophy, can be thus treated.

The data for the full solution of the higher problems of thought are not yet gathered." At some indefinite period, "far in the future," they may be ready to give their testimony.

In presenting these confessions I have done no injustice to the scientific school of skeptics. I have carefully quoted them from one of their leading advocates, and everything has been fair on my part.

Mr. Abbot has made these confessions with his characteristic frankness, shrinking from no position or avowal to which his logic leads him. He aimed to give the purely scientific method of deciding these great questions, and there can be no other purely scientific processes. In the nature of the case such investigation must be both inductive and deductive, and embrace in its scope all phenomena of mind and of nature. Mr. Abbot himself seemed embarrassed with these difficulties, and appropriately said: "You ask, not without reason, Must we then wait for untold years before the vast questions of God and immortality, on which the happiness of the human race depends, can be answered? Are we indeed doomed, as individual men and women, to live and die in this darkness?"

His reply is another confession:

CONFESSION VIII. He says: "Friends, I must frankly meet this inquiry. Science alone must give, in his own

time, the final reply to our anxious and earnest question. Neither my reply nor the reply of any other man should be thrust forward as the sure verdict of the future. But for myself, having studied as earnestly as I could these momentous problems, I have become convinced that the final answer of science will but deepen, fortify, and exalt our human faith in God as an intelligent, self-conscious Being, infinitely more tender and benign than our loftiest conceptions of human love ; and I trust it will strengthen and purify and elevate our human hope of immortality as continued individual existence. We must each of us work out for ourselves our private convictions, in the pure spirit of truth and in unflinching adherence to the great laws of thought. Science must, at last, answer for the whole race ; we must meanwhile answer for ourselves."

THE LATER PHASES.

Since Mr. Abbot discoursed, as we have seen, there has been a very marked change. It is a common confession among eminent men of science that philosophic thought has a new trend, and that materialism is hopelessly behind the age. Professor John Fiske * says : "The moment the first trace of conscious intelligence is introduced we have a set of phenomena which materialism can in nowise account for. . . . Materialism is more and more discredited by the dominant philosophy of our time, and it will no doubt continue to be more

* *North American Review*, March, 1882.

and more discredited with each future advance in philosophic speculation."

There have been marked reverse tendencies, largely from out of the camp of free thought, confirming and establishing the old truths. It is a significant fact, cited by Kuntz, that Kant's philosophy "became a schoolmaster, leading to Christ in manifold ways." The ideas of God, freedom, and immortality Kant acknowledged as "postulates of the practical reason," and the basis of all religion whose contents are above the moral law.

Nor is Kant the only philosopher whose writings have served the cause of faith. The best forms of modern philosophy have modified radical doubt and caused the lines of true speculation to converge toward the lines of Christian truth. It is remarkable how much less atheism and pantheism exist than formerly. Even Hartmann leans strongly toward theism, though not avowing it, for he speaks of "One Absolute Subject," "One Identical Subject." The god of scientific theism—a force, personal or impersonal, behind natural phenomena—is, indeed, not such a being as the Christian theist worships; but such a recognition of Deity is far in advance of the blank atheism and the atheistic theory of chance current a century ago.

"I am no atheist," protested Comte two years before his death; my attitude is that of belief; if not I should have no right to treat of such matters. If you will have a theory of existence, an Intelligent Will is the best you can have." Kant* said: "The great whole would sink into an abyss of nothing if we did not admit of something originally and independently external to this infinite contingent, and as the cause of its origin." Herbert Spencer, professedly discarding the usually accepted idea of God, sometimes falls back upon anthropomorphic conceptions of Deity, and speaks of the "Incomprehensible Existence," the "Unknown Cause," the "Inconceivable Greatness." But his "Unknowable" is "one, not many; the real as opposed to the apparent; a power and a fundamental cause; persistent and unchangeable; omnipresent in space and eternal in time." How significant and rich such affirmations! Professor Tyndall† said: "The idea of a creative power is as necessary to the production of a single original form as to that of a multitude."

As to the doctrine of immortality, the latest revelations of physical and psychological science have augmented the great volume of testimony in its favor. The greatest names in

* *First Principles*, p. 96.

† Belfast address.

modern philosophy, Bacon, Descartes, Leibnitz, Locke, Kant, Hamilton, and even Hartmann, are subscribed in its support. Mr. R. W. Emerson, in 1872, in a lecture in Music Hall, Boston, expressed grave doubts in regard to immortality, but subsequently he declared himself more clearly and confidently in its favor.

I give two very remarkable recent testimonies of great weight. The first is from the *Popular Science Monthly*, in 1894, from the Marquis of Salisbury, on accepting the presidency of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. He makes his own the following quotation from Lord Kelvin, whom he called "the greatest living master of natural science among Englishmen." He said :

"I feel profoundly convinced that the argument of design has been greatly too much lost sight of in recent zoological speculations. Overpoweringly strong proofs of intelligent and benevolent design lie around us ; and if ever perplexities, whether metaphysical or scientific, turn us away from them for a time, they come back upon us with irresistible force, showing to us through nature the influence of a free will, and teaching us that all living things depend on one everlasting Creator and Ruler."

The other eminent testimony dates July,

1895, and was thus reported in the *Congregationalist*:

“Professor John Fiske, speaking at the Green-acre Conference, reiterated those conclusive arguments, which he has recently published, for holding a theory of evolution which postulates God and religion. He said that when a certain type of evolutionists declare that science has destroyed religion they are simply basing their opinion more upon the old anti-religious sentiment of the eighteenth century than upon any real scientific reasoning. Professor Fiske holds that religion, from its earliest and crudest forms to its most refined, contains three essential elements: first, belief in God as in some way either explicable or inexplicable, and yet analogous to man; secondly, belief in an unseen world in which personality continues after death; thirdly, belief in an inseparable connection between the unseen world and the moral law; and he has no patience with Mr. Frederick Harrison’s idea that a hope of survival in the grateful remembrance of one’s fellow-creatures will ever take the place of a belief in personal immortality. He holds that, coeval with the genesis of humanity and the ethical sense, the religious sense also began to appear; and to those who accept this, but believe that such an outreaching of humanity to

the unseen establishes a relation in which the subjective term is real and the objective term is imaginary, Professor Fiske replies that if so it is something without precedent in the process of evolution ; it is an isolated fact in the universe, and this is enough to condemn the supposition, for there are no isolated facts in the universe, or, as Professor Fiske puts it, 'The whole analogy of evolution bears us with resistless momentum to the conclusion that the religious cravings of mankind are correlated with an unseen world that really exists, and in which the process of ethical evolution is to find its fullest fruition and consummation.'

"These essential elements of religion, as Professor Fiske states them, are the primary principles of the Bible, which to the belief in God presents the moral law as from him, and to the belief in an inseparable connection between the unseen world and the moral law presents the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the means of restoration to fellowship with God of those who have broken the moral law and, therefore, their connection with the unseen world. The theory of evolution is constantly undergoing changes, though in some form it is steadily gaining ground among all classes of religious students. It is constantly approaching toward harmony with biblical teachings. As Dr. Fiske expounds

it, it seems to make the fact of a revelation from God not only possible but necessary. If, to these fundamental beliefs which he names, evolution points to objective realities, they must disclose themselves to the human soul reaching out after them. God cannot be silent to those who believe in and love him. The movement of evolution is the activity of the Father of mankind. The Bible is the record of his thought finding expression in human history and experience, and of his love and mercy finding expression in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of his only begotten Son."

Lamartine (*Bien Publique*) eloquently voiced some very striking facts which are pertinent here :

"I know—I sigh when I think of it—that hitherto the French people have been the least religious of all the nations of Europe. Is it because the idea of God—which arises from all the evidences of nature, and from the depths of reflection, being the profoundest and weightiest idea of which human intelligence is capable—and the French mind being the most rapid, but the most superficial, the lightest, the most unreflective of all European races—this mind has not the force and severity necessary to carry far and long the greatest conception of the human understanding?

“Is it because our governments have always taken upon themselves to think for us, to believe for us, and to pray for us? Is it because we are and have been a military people, a soldier nation, led by kings, heroes, ambitious men, from battlefield to battlefield, making conquests and never keeping them, ravaging, dazzling, charming, and corrupting Europe, and bringing home the manners, vices, bravery, lightness, and impiety of the camp to the fire-side of the people?

“I know not; but certain it is that the nation has an immense progress to make in serious thought if she wishes to remain free. If we look at the characters, compared as regards religious sentiment, of the great nations of Europe, America, even Asia, the advantage is not for us. The great men of other countries live and die on the scene of history, looking up to heaven; our great men appear to live and die, forgetting completely the only idea for which it is worth living and dying—they live and die looking at the spectator, or, at most, at posterity.

“Open the history of America, the history of England, and the history of France; read the great lives, the great deaths, the great martyrdoms, the great words at the hour when the ruling thought of life reveals itself in the last words of the dying, and compare.

“Washington and Franklin fought, spoke, suffered, ascended, and descended in their political life of popularity, in the ingratitude of glory, in the contempt of their fellow-citizens—always in the name of God, for whom they acted ; and the liberator of America died confiding to God the liberty of the people and his own soul.

“Sidney, the noble martyr of a patriotism, guilty of nothing but impatience, and who died to expiate his country’s dream of liberty, said to his jailer, ‘ I rejoice that I die innocent toward the king, but a victim, resigned to the King on high, to whom all life is due.’

“The republicans of Cromwell only sought the way of God, even in the blood of battles. Their politics were their faith, their reign a prayer, their death a psalm. One hears, sees, feels, that God was in all the movements of these great people.

“But cross the sea, traverse La Manche, come to our time, open our annals, and listen to the last words of the great political actors of the drama of our liberty. One would think that God was eclipsed from the soul, that his name was unknown in the language. History will have the air of an atheist when she recounts to posterity these annihilations, rather than deaths, of celebrated men in the greatest year

of France ! The victims only have a God ; the tribunes and lictors have none.

“ Look at Mirabeau on the bed of death— ‘ Crown me with flowers,’ said he ; ‘ intoxicate me with perfumes. Let me die to the sound of delicious music.’ Not a word of God, or of his soul. Sensual philosopher, he desired only supreme sensualism, a last voluptuousness in his agony. Contemplate Madame Roland, the strong-hearted woman of the Revolution, on the cart that conveyed her to death. She looked contemptuously on the besotted people who killed their prophets and sibyls. Not a glance toward heaven ! Only one word for the earth she was quitting— ‘ O Liberty ! ’

“ Approach the dungeon door of the Girondins. Their last night is a banquet ; the only hymn the Marseillaise !

“ Follow Camille Desmoulins to his execution. A cool and indecent pleantry at the trial, and a long imprecation on the road to the guillotine, were the last two thoughts of this dying man on his way to the last tribunal.

“ Hear Danton on the platform of the scaffold, at the distance of a line from God and eternity : ‘ I have had a good time of it ; let me go to sleep.’ Then to the executioner : ‘ You will show my head to the people—it is worth the

trouble!’ His faith, annihilation; his last sigh, vanity. Behold the Frenchmen of this latter age!

“What must one think of the religious sentiment of a free people whose great figures seem thus to march in procession to annihilation, and to whom that terrible minister—death—itself, recalls neither the threatenings nor promises of God.

“The republic of these men, without a God, has quickly been stranded. The liberty, won by so much heroism and so much genius, has not found in France a conscience to shelter it, a God to avenge it, a people to defend it against that atheism which has been called glory. All ended in a soldier and some apostate republicans travestied into courtiers. An atheistic republicanism cannot be heroic. When you terrify it, it bends; when you would buy it, it sells itself. It would be very foolish to immolate itself. Who would take any heed? The people ungrateful, and God nonexistent. So finish atheistic revolutions!”

Genuine Historic Basis of Christianity.

CHAPTER II.

GENUINE HISTORIC BASIS OF CHRISTIANITY.

LET us imagine ourselves visitors to this earth from some distant planet. Approaching in swift flight, at early dawn, we meet a dark spirit hovering on poised wing. Through the mists of the morning we feebly discern a stately spire, as of some goodly temple pointing heavenward, and ask the strange spirit what it is. He replies, "It is only a myth—an illusion." As we continue to gaze, turrets, towers, and battlements loom up through the departing mists. "See," we exclaim, "it must be more than a myth." "Nay," he replies, "it is only an optical illusion or a subjective vision."

While we look the orb of day rises higher in the heavens, pouring down his effulgence upon the earth. The mists, gathering up their dripping skirts, flee away, revealing a temple of magnificent dimensions securely founded upon a rock.

Christianity has met with similar treatment—has been represented as mythical, illusory,

unworthy of credence as to historic origin, a noxious delusion as to its peculiar claims, a failure as to its avowed purposes, a compound of human superstition and credulity unworthy of rational acceptance.

Other aspects of the questions at issue between the Church and modern skepticism will be subsequently considered. The topic now under consideration comes naturally first in order, for if Christianity is without a veritable historic basis we need not trouble ourselves further; but if it has such a basis it challenges attention and further inquiry.

Let it not be presumed, however, that this question depends solely upon what our adversaries say. By no means. A vast amount of positive evidence can be adduced. But we propose to show that the historic basis of Christianity can be vindicated by the admissions of its enemies. Attention is invited to several classes of concessions.

I. The admissions of eminent rationalists as to the validity of the testimonies of three prominent fathers of the early Church.

In going back to scrutinize the origin of Christianity skeptics have found three distinguished early fathers standing directly in their pathway; and such leading unbelievers as Eichhorn, Strauss, and others have been con-

strained to acknowledge that the testimonies of these fathers is irrefragable. I refer to Irenæus of France, Tertullian of Carthage, and Clement of Alexandria, all of whom flourished between A. D. 150 and 220. Irenæus, in his youth, was a disciple of Polycarp in Asia Minor. Polycarp had been a disciple of St. John, and had talked also with others who had seen the Saviour. Thus we see Irenæus was separated from Jesus by only two links. It is like connecting our great historian, Bancroft, with the first quarter of the last century by Thomas Jefferson, whose life lapped over on to Benjamin Franklin's, who reached back to that period. Irenæus died A. D. 202; Tertullian and Clement died about twenty years later, and hence were not much more remote from the origin of Christianity. What is their testimony?

In a single book, now extant, Irenæus quotes four hundred times from the four gospels, more than eighty passages from St. John's gospel, and expressly asserts that there are four gospels, precisely four, neither more nor less—and says the four gospels are the four pillars of the Church. He also accepted as authentic and canonical Acts, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second

Timothy, Titus, First and Second Peter, First and Second John.

Tertullian, in his copious volumes, quotes many hundred passages from the gospels as proof texts, over two hundred from John's gospel. So of other books.

Clement also makes many similar allusions to the New Testament books.

So high did these fathers rank for character and learning, so abundant and well-authenticated are their extant writings, and so full of facts and allusions pertaining to the origin of the Christian religion, that rationalists, when pressed to the issue, have acknowledged that it is of no use to attempt to break this testimony.

The first acknowledgment, then, is that the testimonies of Irenæus, Clement, and Tertullian in favor of the historic truthfulness of Christianity are genuine and beyond dispute.

But it is claimed that, from the times prior to these fathers, no testimony can be adduced worthy of acceptance as veritable history.

Let us go back to this period and see what we find. Passing by Justin Martyr, Papias, and Polycarp, because they were friends of Christianity; passing by the friendly testimonies of the catacombs, the monuments, and the early Christian sects; passing also the numer-

ous confirmations of the historic accuracy of the New Testament records in their allusions to the countries, rulers, events, and customs of those times, we have, in the first century,

II. Testimonies of three distinguished Roman adversaries of Christianity.

I refer to Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, and Tacitus, who flourished between the years 40 and 120 of the Christian era. Having their birth within ten or twenty years of the death of Jesus, and residing chiefly in Rome, the center of intelligence, they attained the highest rank for knowledge, candor, and reliability, and their productions are justly esteemed by critical scholars as the most credible of all extant Roman writings. The single testimony of either is sufficient to establish any matter in Roman history. How much more their concurrent testimony.

They were enemies of the new faith, and stigmatized it with opprobrious epithets. Pliny called it "an excessive superstition," and forbade the Christians holding any more meetings in his province. Suetonius characterized it as "a mischievous superstition," and Tacitus as "a vile superstition." He also declared that "the crimes" of the Christians "called for the hand of justice," regarding the introduction of a new religion, so radically different

from the established religion of the empire, as a serious offense.

And yet, notwithstanding their unfriendly attitude toward the Christian religion, these highly reputable Roman writers bear valuable historic testimony in favor of Christianity.

Suetonius, in his *Life of Nero*,* said, "The Christians likewise were severely punished, a sort of people who maintained a new and mischievous superstition." (About A. D. 64.)

Pliny, the proconsul of Bithynia, writing to the emperor Adrian, about forty years after the death of St. Paul, mentioned the Christians in his province. He said: † "The whole of their fault lay in this, that they met on a stated day, as soon as it was light, and addressed themselves in a prayer or a hymn to Christ, as to God, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for any wicked purpose, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery; never to falsify their word nor deny a trust reposed in them; after which it was their custom to separate and then reassemble to eat their meals together in a manner perfectly harmless and inoffensive."

* Translated by Alexander Thompson, M.D. (London, 1796), p. 435.

† See Murphy's *Tacitus* (Bangs, Brother & Co., New York, 1852), p. 287, note.

Mr. Melmoth, an eminent English scholar and lawyer, says this letter of Pliny is a "genuine monument of ecclesiastical antiquity."

Tacitus, speaking of the great fire in Rome, A. D. 64, says that when Nero was accused of burning the city he, in turn, charged it upon the Christians.

"Nero judicially accused of the offense, and punished with the most studied torments, a set of men hated for their wickedness, who were commonly called Christians. The author of that sect was Christ, who, in the reign of Tiberius, suffered death by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate. The vile superstition, repressed for a time, again broke out, not only in Judea, the nest of the mischief, but in this city also, whither all atrocious and scandalous things flow, and where all flourish. At first those only were apprehended who confessed themselves of that sect; afterward a vast multitude discovered by them, all of whom were condemned, not so much for the crime of burning the city as for their enmity to mankind." (Lardner's translation.)

These three Roman writers unwittingly attest the following points:

That Jesus Christ existed on earth; that he lived in Judea; that he founded a religion;

that he was put to death ; that his death occurred under the sentence of Pontius Pilate, during the reign of Tiberius Cæsar ; that his religion spread rapidly ; that it was radically different from the prevailing religions ; that his followers were pure in life ; that they met on a stated day for worship ; that they worshiped Christ as God ; that they could not be made to revile the name of Christ ; that they carefully avoided all wickedness and led harmless and inoffensive lives.

These are fundamental facts connected with the origin of Christianity.

Does some one ask, What does infidelity say in reference to these testimonies ? I will tell you. It has never questioned those of Suetonius and Pliny, but has felt it important to excite doubt in regard to so convincing a testimony as that of Tacitus. A few modern skeptics have contended that this famous passage of Tacitus is spurious—an interpolation, inserted into some early manuscripts, by Christians, for the purpose of making him bear testimony in favor of Christianity.

Do you ask what I have to say in reply to this assertion ? I will say nothing, on my own part, for in this discussion everything must turn on the testimony of our adversaries. Edward Gibbon, a leader in skeptical thought

in Great Britain at the close of the last century, shall decide this question. In his preparation for and the writing of his great work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, he spent twenty years, during which time he lived in the midst of Roman manuscripts and achieved the reputation of being the best judge of their genuineness in his day. What says Gibbon? *

“The most skeptical criticism is obliged to respect the truth of this extraordinary fact and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus.

“The former is confirmed by the diligent and accurate Suetonius, who mentions the punishment which Nero inflicted on the Christians, a sect of men who had embraced a new and criminal superstition. The latter may be proved by the consent of the most ancient manuscripts; by the inimitable character of the style of Tacitus; by his reputation, which guarded his text from the interpolations of pious fraud; and by the purport of his narrative, which accused the first Christians of the most atrocious crimes,” etc.

Gibbon thus indorses not only the genuineness of this celebrated passage, but also the high reputation of Tacitus, and the “accuracy”

* See Milman's *Gibbon*, Harpers, 1841, vol. i, p. 298.

of Suetonius. In subsequent paragraphs we find him also fully accrediting the letter of Pliny to Adrian.

There is another passage in Tacitus's history deserving attention. Referring to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, he says: *

"The Christians who resided in the city of Jerusalem, finding that Titus was approaching at the head of his army, knew their time to depart. They saw, according to the warning given them by Christ himself, that desolation was nigh, and, as commanded, fled to the mountains."

How striking a confirmation of Jesus's words (Luke xxi, 20, 21), "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out," etc.

Here, then, we have three of the most eminent Roman historians in the first Christian century, all positively hostile to Christianity, unwittingly bearing testimony to vital historic facts connected with its origin.

We have also a distinguished modern adversary of Christianity testifying to the genuineness and high character of the testimonies

* Appendix to Book V, *History*, Murphy's edition, p. 515.

of these three early adversaries. This makes a double and twisted proof.

III. The admissions of learned philosophical opposers of Christianity in the first four centuries.

The impression is quite common that only within a few years has Christianity been subjected to critical investigation. How false the impression! Christianity had its origin in the midst of the learned schools of Alexandria, Greece, and Rome, and its most notable early opponents were philosophers. During the first four centuries it encountered not only civil persecution, but also critical investigation from learned men, who subjected it to the closest scrutiny; but it thrived under this treatment. There were Celsus, an Epicurean philosopher, in the second century; Porphyry, a man of great abilities and high repute for learning, in the third century; Hierocles, a learned man and a magistrate, and Julian, the Roman emperor, in the fourth century; all of whom opposed Christianity on dogmatic grounds. But it is well known that they never denied the existence or the historic character of the books of the New Testament, or that these books were written by the men whose names they bear; nor were the leading facts of the gospels disputed.

The elaborate treatise written by Celsus against Christianity, entitled *A True Discourse*, like many other ancient manuscripts, perished; but its contents are well indicated by the quotations of Origen, who took pains to answer it, proposition by proposition. The work of Celsus was written in a spirit of intense hatred, and spares no thrust which criticism, calumny, and sarcasm could supply. Copious extracts from Celsus's writings have been preserved in the writings of Origen, and they contain an abridgment of the whole gospel history—eighty distinct quotations from the books of the New Testament, some of them quite lengthy. He ridiculed many things, but never questioned the authenticity of the books.

Porphyry, a representative of Neoplatonism in the third century, was radically hostile to the doctrines of Christianity, notwithstanding in his theorizing he borrowed much from it, and ascribed to Christ the character of a noble and sincere teacher of truth. He accepted the books of the New Testament as written by the men whose names they bear. Similar statements might be given of Julian and Hierocles.

These early adversaries of Christianity in their writings refer to the facts of the gospel history, quoting so often and so freely the

language of Christ and of the apostles that it has been well said, if the New Testament were wholly lost out of the world it would not be difficult, from the writings of these early learned opposers, to make out a tolerable history of our Lord.

Living at a time so near the origin of this sect, being men of note and influence, and having access to original sources of information, they could have discredited these things relating to Christianity if there had been any chance to do it; and this would have been the most effectual way to put down the new religion. Instead of attempting to do so, they admitted these facts without dissent.

IV. The corroborating acknowledgment of two eminent philosophic men of our day.

Mr. John Stuart Mill, whose well-known skepticism will shield him from any charge of favoritism toward Christianity, and whose ability as a logician will command for his opinion the highest respect, has said * in regard to this historic question :

“Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left; a unique figure not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who hold the direct benefit of his personal teaching. It is of no use

* *Essays on Religion* (Henry Holt & Co., New York), p. 253.

to say that Christ, as exhibited in the gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of his followers. The tradition of his followers suffices to insert any number of marvels, and may have inserted all the miracles which he is represented to have wrought. But who among his disciples was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee ; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort ; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they always professed that it was derived, from the higher source."

Rousseau, the eloquent, gushing French skeptic, in his *Émile*, said :

"Where could Jesus learn, among his competitors, that pure and sublime morality of which he only hath given us both precept and example? The greatest wisdom was made known among the most bigoted fanaticism, and the simplicity of the most heroic virtues did honor to the vilest people upon earth.

• • • • •
" Shall we suppose the evangelic history a

mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition only shifts the difficulty without obviating it. It is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history than that only one should furnish the history of it. The Jewish writers were incapable of the diction and strangers to the morality contained in the Gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero."

Thus far in our inquiries into the acknowledgments of its adversaries we find Christianity, as to its origin, a genuine historic institution, as much so as the French or English nation; we find Jesus Christ a veritable personage of history, as much so as Julius Cæsar, Shakespeare, or Napoleon Bonaparte; and the books of the New Testament as reliable historic books as the writings of Tacitus, or Thucydides, or Plato. We have gained, then, a sure footing inside of the Bible, in the books of the New Testament. And all by the concessions of the opponents of the Christian religion.

We might pause here and inquire, What is the New Testament without the Old? Or we

might say the Old Testament is vindicated by the oft-repeated appeals of the New, calling it "the word of the Lord."

But such a line of argument is not here allowed. We have committed the case into the hands of our adversaries, and have vowed that this discussion shall turn upon their testimonies.

As to the Old Testament.

The next question is, What testimony can be produced from men opposed to Bible religion, or at least standing outside of it, in favor of accepting the Old Testament as a veritable historic book of religion?

1. As to the prophetic and the professedly historic books, the Pentateuch excepted. The prophetic books and the Psalms cover a chronological period identical with the books of Samuel, the Kings, and the Chronicles, and the events, prophecies, admonitions, encouragements, etc., are interwoven and interdependent, so that they cannot exist if separated, or at least they lose their significance.

As to the reliability of this portion of the Old Testament, one of the most distinguished as well as one of the severest rationalistic critics, De Wette, has said, "that the historic certainty of the prophets is unquestionable, that the time of their prophecies and the facts can be fixed by the surest marks, and that

they appear to have been free from prejudices, candid and unconstrained by positive fetters, without a party, and against every party, simply as witnesses for the truth."

2. As to the Pentateuch.

Testimonies of indifferent outsiders: Hecataeus, a friend of Alexander the Great, in the fourth century B. C., wrote on the history and antiquities of the Jews. From his writings we gather incidental confirmations of the several leading facts of the Mosaic records :

That "Egypt was visited by a pestilence," which was "charged upon certain strangers living among them ;"

That these strangers "had different customs in regard to rites and ceremonies," on account of which "the worship of the Egyptian gods was neglected ;"

That "the Egyptians resolved to rid themselves of these strangers, and accordingly banished them ;"

That "the mass of the people fled to what is now called Judea," "led by a man named Moses, who was distinguished for great prudence and courage ;"

That "this man appointed the sacred rites in honor of the Deity, and regulated the civil affairs." *

* Rawlinson's *Evidences*, p. 254.

Manetho, an Egyptian, about 300 B. C., wrote an Egyptian history. He said of the Jews :

That "their State was organized and their laws established by a priest" born in Egypt, "whose name, when he joined himself to this people, was changed to Moses." *

Lysimachus, a writer in the Augustan age, discoursed concerning Moses and his laws.†

Polemon, in the first book of his Grecian history, said :

"In the reign of Apis, the son of Phoroneus, a division of the army of the Egyptians deserted Egypt and settled in what is called Syria, Palestine, not far from Arabia; these were they who were with Moses."

Justin, a Roman writer, who condensed a previously written history by Cornelius Nepos, another Roman author, mentioned very many of the leading facts of the books of Moses :

That the origin of the Jews was from the region "whence also the Assyrian kings spring," which agrees with the Padan-aram from which Abraham emigrated to the land of promise ;

That Abraham and Israel were early "kings" or chiefs of the Jews ;

That Israel's "prosperous family made him more famous than any of his ancestors ;"

* Rawlinson's *Evidences*, p. 255. † *Ibid.*, p. 255.

That the government was divided among his sons ;

That the youngest of the sons was " Joseph, whom the others, fearing his extraordinary abilities, secretly made prisoner, and sold to foreign merchants ; "

That they carried him into Egypt, where, " by his great powers of mind, he made himself master of the arts of magic and found great favor with the king ; "

That he (Joseph) was " the first to establish the science of interpreting dreams, " and that " nothing of divine or human law seems to have been unknown to him ; "

That " he foretold a dearth in the land some years before it happened, " and that " all Egypt would have perished by famine had not the king by his advice ordered the corn to be laid up for several years. "

Justin also speaks of " Moses " by name (though he mistakes in calling him the son of Joseph), and as inheriting " superior knowledge and comeliness of person. " He also mentioned the pestilence in Egypt, the exodus, that Moses became the leader of the exiles, that they settled for a season in the region of Sinai, that the seventh day was consecrated as a day of rest.*

* See Justin, Bohn's Classical Library (London, 1853), pp. 244-246.

Tacitus, another Roman writer, speaks of the Assyrian origin of the Jews as one of the theories held in his day, of the pestilences in Egypt, of Moses as their deliverer, that he claimed to be divinely called to be their chief; of their venturesome march in the wilderness, the want of water and its discovery in a rock, the expulsion of the Canaanites, the possession of the country, the new form of worship and system of ceremonies given by Moses, the sacrifices of rams and oxen, the prohibition of swine flesh as an article of food, the fasts, the unleavened bread, the Sabbath, the seventh year devoted to inactivity, the rite of circumcision, the belief in a future state, the unity of God, the spirituality of God, the supreme government of God, the prohibition of idolatry, the festive days and their unlikeness to the pagan rites of Bacchus, etc.—and adds that “these rites and ceremonies, from whatever source derived, owe their chief support to their antiquity.” * What remarkable details for a Roman writer to relate!

Other early outside testimonies may be produced from Eupolemus, Longinus, Juvenal, Nicholas of Damascus, etc. †

* Murphy's *Tacitus* (Bangs, Brother & Co., New York, 1852), pp. 498-504.

† Rawlinson's *Evidences*, pp. 255, 256.

In these testimonies we have the vital historic facts of the Pentateuch.

I have next a class of testimonies from men more positively hostile to Christianity, who not only accept the substantial facts of Moses's history, but who vindicate his high character and the genuineness of Moses's books :

Numenius, a Pythagorean philosopher, called Moses "a man most powerful in prayer to God;" and said, "What is Plato, but Moses speaking in the Attic dialect?"

Porphyry, one of the most acute and learned enemies of Christianity, admitted the genuineness of the Pentateuch, and acknowledged that Moses was prior to Sanchoniathon, a Phœnician historian who lived before the Trojan war; and Porphyry also vindicated the truth of Sanchoniathon's account of the Jews, because of its agreement with Moses's history.

The emperor Julian, who wrote powerfully against Christianity in the fourth century A. D., allowed that the books which bear the name of Moses are genuine, and that the facts they contain are worthy of credit.

The genuineness of the Pentateuch was not denied by any of the numerous writers against Christianity in the first four centuries.

Mohammed maintained the divine inspiration

of Moses and revered the sanctity of the Jewish laws.

Testimonies of unfriendly modern critics: Many distinguished scholars of modern times, who have maintained a rationalistic or a semi-rationalistic attitude, and have subjected the Old Testament records to the most searching criticism, have made some remarkable declarations. Ewald, Lepsius, Brugsch, Rougé, Bunsen, and others have been brought by the internal evidences of the Hebrew Scriptures to the conviction of the historic personality of Moses and the verity of the fundamental facts of his writings.

Some of these men were the great masters of Egyptology, and closely compared the Hebrew narratives with the monumental and literary remains of Egypt.

Brugsch speaks of certain monuments of Rameses II as a highly satisfactory commentary upon the authentic narrative of the Exodus of the Hebrew Scriptures; and Bunsen, determining Egypt's place in universal history, says of the same narrative, "The Exodus is an historical fact which occurred in an historical age, and was governed by notorious great events and circumstances of importance to general history;" and again, with even greater emphasis, he says, "History was

born in that night when Moses, with the law of God, moral and spiritual, in his heart, led the people of Israel out of Egypt.'*"

De Wette says: "After the exile the whole political and ecclesiastical life of the Jews is founded on the Mosaic book of the law; and the mention of the present Pentateuch is as certain as it is frequent."

Such are the acknowledgments of eminent scholars, holding low views of inspiration, to the historic verity of Moses.

Other incidental confirmations of the historical accuracy of the Bible might be adduced from outside sources, both historical and monumental. Allusions to geography, to countries, to divisions of countries, to cities, to districts and provinces; to rulers and changes in rulers; to contemporary events; to prevailing manners and customs at different times, however remote; to the condition of nations at different periods, their rise and decline—all these things have been carefully examined and compared with the best profane historians, and also with impartial monuments which have recently been discovered, and the substantial historical accuracy of the Bible has been completely demonstrated.

Many of these monuments, Babylonian,

* *Boston Lectures*, 1871, p. 91.

Egyptian, and Grecian, including also the Moabite Stone, are of great antiquity. Their inscriptions, which have been deciphered, furnish telling confirmations of the historic truthfulness of the Old Testament.

The Transcendent Character of Christianity as a Religious System.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRANSCENDENT CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY AS A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM.

IN the previous chapter we imagined ourselves visitors to this earth from a far-off planet. Approaching in swift flight, at early dawn, we met a dark spirit, hovering on poised wing. Through the mists of the morning we discerned a stately spire, as of some goodly temple, pointing heavenward, and asked, "What is it?" He replied, "It is only a myth, an illusion." As we continued to gaze turrets, towers, and battlements loomed up through the departing mists. "See!" we said; "it must be more than a myth." "Nay," he replied, "it is only an optical illusion or a subjective vision."

While we looked the orb of day rose higher in the heavens, pouring down his rays upon the earth. The mists, gathering up their dripping skirts, fled away, revealing a temple of magnificent dimensions, securely founded upon a rock.

In the discussions of the previous chapter we saw Christianity, which skeptics have denounced as a myth with only a legendary

origin, and unworthy of rational credence, fully vindicated upon a basis of veritable historic facts, and that, too, by the testimonies of its enemies.

Let us now approach the temple and inspect it more closely, but still from without.

This temple represents Christianity as a genuine historic religious system. It stands before us in stately, mystic proportions. In this chapter I propose to show, from the acknowledgments of the same class of persons as before testified,

I. The transcendent excellence of Christianity as a religious system.

As to the literary excellence of the Bible one unwitting acknowledgment shall suffice. When in Paris, Hon. Daniel Webster heard an account of a French infidel who happened to find in a drawer of his library some stray leaves of a volume unknown to him. Like most infidels, he had a habit of denouncing the Bible, though he never read it. These fugitive leaves contained the prayer of Habakkuk (chap. iii). Being a man of fine literary tastes, he was captivated with its poetic beauty, and hastened to the club house to announce the discovery to his associates. Of course they were anxious to know the name of the gifted author, to which inquiries the elated infidel re-

plied, "A writer by the name of Hab-ba-cook, of course a Frenchman." Great was his surprise when informed that the passage was penned by one of God's Jewish prophets. "This I regard," said Webster, "as one of the sublimest passages of inspired literature."

But at this point we have to do with the moral and religious excellence of Christianity.

In their better moods, skeptics of the earlier and the later times have made extraordinary declarations in regard to the elevated character of our holy religion.

Bolingbroke, a distinguished English deist, said: "No religion ever appeared in the world whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind as Christianity. No system can be more simple and plain than that of natural religion as it stands in the gospels. The system of religion which Christ published and his evangelists recorded is a complete system for all the purposes of religion, natural and revealed. Christianity, as it stands in the Gospels, is not only a complete but a very plain system of religion. The Gospel is, in all cases, one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity."

Thomas Paine said: "Jesus Christ was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality

which he preached and practiced was of the most benevolent kind. Though many similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius and by some of the Greek philosophers many years before, and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any."

Mr. John Stuart Mill, one of the most radical doubters of our times, says : * " I grant that some of the precepts of Christ as exhibited in the gospels—rising far above the Paulism which is the foundation of ordinary Christianity—carry some kinds of moral goodness to a greater height than had ever been attained before, though much even of what is supposed to be peculiar to them is equaled in the *Meditations* of Marcus Antoninus, which we have no ground for believing to have been in any way indebted to Christianity. †

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"The 'new commandment to love one another;' the recognition that the greatest are those who serve, not those who are served by others; the reverence for the weak and humble, which is the foundation of chivalry,

* *Essays on Religion*, pp. 97, 98.

† Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was born A. D. 121, in Rome. Christianity had been in Rome about one hundred years before he reached manhood.

they, and not the strong, being pointed out as having the first place in God's regard and the first claim on their fellow-men; the lesson of the parable of the good Samaritan; that of 'He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone;' the precept of doing as we would be done by, and such other noble moralities as are to be found, mixed with some poetical exaggerations and some maxims of which it is difficult to ascertain the precise object, in the authentic sayings of Jesus of Nazareth—these are surely in sufficient harmony with the intellect and feelings of every good man or woman to be in no danger of being let go after having been once acknowledged as the creed of the best and foremost portions of our species."

Rousseau said: "If all were perfect Christians individuals would do their duty; the people would be obedient to the laws, the magistrates incorruptible; and there would be neither vanity nor luxury in such a State."

Goethe's extreme skeptical attitude is well known. But he had times in which he devoted considerable attention to the Bible. One day his free-thinking friends reproached him for wasting his time over the Bible. He replied, "I am convinced the Bible becomes more beautiful the more I understand it."

Again he said: "No criticism will be able to perplex the confidence which we have entertained of a writing whose contents have stirred up and given life to our vital energy by its own."

Mrs. Ednah D. Cheney, before the Radical Club, in Boston, April, 1870, said: "Jesus of Nazareth had ideas and beliefs which have developed into a Church worshiping his name. I find in them a richness of meaning and an affluence of power which I have not yet exhausted, and which I do not think have yet had their full representation or done their full work in the world. As I know of no intellectual theme on which Plato has not something to say to me, so on every moral and spiritual question, it seems to me, the New Testament has something higher for me than I find from any other human source."

Even Renan had his children brought up under the training of Protestant teachers, because, as he said, "He feels that they must be reared under the discipline of some religion; and he prefers that which has always been in favor of liberty."

Hon. Thomas Jefferson, during a considerable part of his life an avowed unbeliever, speaking of the Bible, said: "I have always said, and always will say, that the studious

perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands."

Professor Huxley said: "By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized?"

A member of the French Academy visiting Diderot, one of the leading French infidels, found him explaining a chapter of the New Testament to his daughter. His visitor expressing surprise, Diderot replied, "What better lesson could I give her?"

Lord Chesterfield, the most polite and well-bred man of his times, and also one of the greatest wits, imbibed deeply the current skepticism of his age, though he was never a zealous promoter of infidelity. Being one day at Brussels, he was waited upon by Voltaire, who invited him to sup with him and Madame C——. His lordship accepted the invitation. The conversation happening to turn upon the affairs of England, the lady remarked, "I think, my lord, that the Parliament of England consists of several hundred of the best improved and most sensible men in the kingdom." Chesterfield replied, "True, madam; they are generally supposed to be so." "What, then," said she, "can be the reason that they tolerate so great an absurdity as the Christian religion?" "I suppose, madam," replied his

lordship, "it is because they have not been able to substitute anything better in its stead; when they can I do not doubt but in wisdom they will readily accept it."

The carping world is continually making tacit acknowledgments of the superior excellence of Christianity. It does it in its taunts of the inconsistencies of Christians. A young infidel was once scoffing at Christianity in the presence of Rev. Dr. John M. Mason, on account of the misconduct of some of its professors. Dr. Mason calmly turned to him and asked, "Did you ever know an uproar made because an infidel went astray from the paths of morality?" The infidel admitted he had not. "Then," said Dr. Mason, "you admit Christianity to be a holy religion by expecting its professors to be holy; and thus, by your very scoffing, you pay it the highest compliment in your power."

Such are the remarkable acknowledgments:

Bolingbroke—That Christianity is "a complete system for all the purposes of religion, natural and revealed—one continued lesson of the strictest morality, justice, benevolence, and universal charity."

Thomas Paine—That "the morality which Christ preached was of the most benevolent kind; it has not been exceeded by any."

John Stuart Mill—That “some of the precepts of Christ . . . carry some kinds of moral goodness to a greater height than had ever been attained before.”

Rousseau—That “if all were perfect Christians . . . there would be neither vanity nor luxury in such a state.”

Ednah D. Cheney—That “on every moral and spiritual question the New Testament has something higher for me than I find from any other human source.”

Diderot and Huxley—That they could “find no better lessons to teach their children than those of the Bible.”

Lord Chesterfield—That it is impossible to find anything better than the Christian religion to substitute in its place.

The Christian religion, then, is not only a temple of magnificent proportions, but also of transcendently glorious character; the best religion by far, even by the confessions of its enemies, the world ever saw, with precepts, examples, and morals the purest and highest ever promulgated, and for which no substitute can be found.

After all, if Christianity is only like a beautiful ideal temple, or a mere system of refined ethics and elevated sentiment, but destitute of operating force, with no practical efficiency to

transform and elevate, it is of little available value in such a world as this.

It is, then, a pertinent question, not to be overlooked, Has Christianity any power to change and mold the world and make it better? Have any influences emanated from this goodly system which have transformed, regenerated, gladdened, and elevated men? What have been the actual effects upon society? What have our enemies to say about it?

Let us, then, next notice admissions touching,

II. Christianity as a reforming and uplifting force in the world.

Gibbon, the distinguished Roman historian, and one of the most radical skeptics of his time, was, withal, sometimes quite candid in his treatment of Christianity, making remarkable acknowledgments. He said: "The primitive Christian demonstrated his faith by his virtues. . . . It is a very ancient reproach, suggested by the ignorance or the malice of infidelity, that the [early] Christians allured to their party the most atrocious criminals, who, as soon as they were touched by a sense of remorse, were easily persuaded to wash away in the waters of baptism the guilt of their past conduct, for which the temples of the gods refused them any expiation. But this reproach, when it is cleared from misrepresentation, con-

tributes as much to the honor as it did to the increase of the Church. The friends of Christianity may acknowledge without a blush that many of the most eminent saints had been, before their baptism, the most abandoned sinners." *

Mr. Lecky, a radical rationalist, treats Christianity with rare candor. In his *History of European Morals* he says:

"It has been reserved for Christianity to present the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting in all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the highest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of Christ's active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. It has been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings; amid all the priestcraft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved in the character and example of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration."

* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, i, p. 267.

Mr. Lecky also said: "The history of self-sacrifice during the last eighteen hundred years has been mainly the history of the action of Christianity upon the world; the moral type and beauty, the enlarged conceptions and persuasive power, of the Christian faith have chiefly called it [self-sacrifice] into being, and it is by their influence alone that it can be permanently sustained. The power of Christianity, in this respect, can only cease with the annihilation of the moral nature of mankind."

Speaking of the Christian faith, Rousseau said: * "A purer faith has given a greater gentleness to Christian manners. This improvement is not the work of literature; for wherever literature has previously flourished humanity has not been the more respected by its means; the cruelties of the Athenians, the Egyptians, the Roman emperors, and the Chinese are examples of this truth."

One day Voltaire entertained at his house in Fernay some of the most learned unbelievers of the last century. Conversation turning upon the Christian religion, Voltaire's guests indulged in all sorts of infidel taunts against our holy faith, and said all they could to bring it into discredit. To the great surprise of his friends, Voltaire

* *Boyle Lectures*, by Rev. William Harness, 1821, vol. i, p. 165.

sent away all his servants who had been waiting at the table, and locked the door to prevent their coming in again. "If these servants are obedient and honest," he said, "it is entirely the result of their religious prejudices. One must respect these prejudices, if we do not wish to change a set of lambs into fierce wild beasts." This was a high compliment to Christianity by a man who did more than any other in his day to overthrow it.

More than once does Renan give testimony against himself, in the light of which his interpretation of the life of Jesus is clearly insufficient and ridiculous. He concedes that "the greatest era in human history dates from Jesus." He asks, "Who laid the foundations of a new social order? Who opened to drooping humanity a career of immense progress?" He confesses it was Christ. "All history," he says, "is incomprehensible without Christ."

Two men, one of whom was an infidel, accustomed to freely denounce Christianity as a humbug and its professors as hypocrites, were traveling on a western frontier. Spending the night in an uninviting cabin, far from the borders of civilization, they agreed to share the night in watching with their pistols in readiness for defense. Before retiring to rest their host took down his well-worn Bible, read, and

fervently prayed, kindly remembering the strangers. Retiring to their room, the skeptic, to whom had been assigned the first watch, instead of preparing his pistols prepared for sleep. When reminded by his companion of his agreement the infidel confessed that he could but feel safe where the Bible was read and such prayers offered as they had just listened to.

Mr. James A. Froude says : * “ All that we call modern civilization in a sense which deserves the name is the visible expression of the transforming power of the Gospel.”

Lecky says : † “ As a matter of fact Christianity has done more to quicken the affections of mankind, to promote piety, to create a pure and merciful idea, than any other influence that has ever acted upon the world.”

Carlyle has well said : ‡ “ The Christian religion must be regarded as the coming glory, or rather the life and soul, of our whole modern culture.”

Charles R. Darwin protested against the depreciation of the work of missionaries by infidel tourists :

“ The slanderers forget—or rather they will not consider—that human sacrifice, the power

* *Short Studies*, ii, p. 39. † *European Morals*, ii, p. 163.

‡ *Essays on The Signs of the Times*.

of an idolatrous priesthood, a systematically refined sensuality which has no parallel in the world—child murder—that all this is put away and abolished, and that dishonesty and intemperance and impurity have been to a great extent lessened through the introduction of Christianity. It is the basest ingratitude on the part of writers of travels to forget this. Were it their lot to stand in expectation of suffering shipwreck on some unknown coast they would direct a fervent prayer to heaven that the teachings of the missionaries might have reached its inhabitants.”

What remarkable acknowledgments we here have!—of Gibbon, that the “Christian demonstrated his faith by his virtues, that the friends of Christianity may acknowledge without a blush that many of the most eminent saints had been before their baptism the most abandoned sinners;” of Voltaire, that the obedience and honesty of his servants was due to their religion; and of Lecky that Christianity through all the century has shown itself capable of acting in all nations and temperaments and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the greatest incentive to its practice; and that it has done more to improve mankind than all that philosophers and moralists have done.

We see, then, that Christianity is something more than a beautiful temple, more than a lofty ethical and religious ideal, more than a refined sentiment ; that out of Christianity flow living influences ; that it is an actual operative force ; that it is eminently productive of the best welfare of society ; that it has checked the evil tides of the world ; that it has exerted a more powerful purifying and uplifting influence than any and all other religions that ever appeared upon earth.

These facts, conceded by men who have rejected Christianity as we understand it, suggest another inquiry :

Must not a system of religion so purifying, so regenerating, and so potential for good possess superhuman and supernatural elements ? Must it not be divine ? What say our enemies ?

The Divinity of Christianity.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRISTIANITY.

I. As to the superhuman character of Christ.

Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson represented the most radical unbelief, and in one place spoke of Christianity as "an Eastern monarchy, built by indolence and fear," and "dwelling with noxious exaggeration about the person of Christ." Nevertheless, in a more candid mood he expressed great admiration of Christ. In his peculiar style he said of Christ, "He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul. Alone in all history, he estimated the greatness of man."

Mr. John Stuart Mill did not accept Christ as we do, but he was constrained to make remarkable acknowledgments as to his high character and superior wisdom. He said :*

"About the life and sayings of Jesus there is a stamp of personal originality combined with profundity of insight, which, if we abandon the idle expectation of finding scientific precision where something very different was aimed at, must place the Prophet of Naz-

* *Essays on Religion*, pp. 253, 254.

areth, even in the estimation of those who have no belief in his inspiration, in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast. When this pre-eminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer and martyr to that mission who ever existed upon earth, religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor, even now, would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue, from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life."

Such is the testimony to the lofty character of Christ and his teachings, by a "keen, passionless logician," a "cold, eagle-eyed detector of sophistries and shams," a "philosopher brought up to think religion not worth a sensible man's attention."

Hegel saw in Christ "the union of the human and the divine," "the Person in whose self-consciousness the union of the human and the divine first appears."

Spinoza spoke of Christ as "the truest symbol of heavenly wisdom."

Strauss said, "He is the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought."

Schelling, "He is the turning point in the world's history."

Fichte, "His followers are nations and generations."

Richter, "He is one who with his pierced hands raised empires from their foundations and turned the stream of history from its old channels."

The great philosopher Kant testified to the ideal perfection of Jesus. When Borowski rashly placed too near to each other the names of Kant and Christ, Kant nobly said,* "The one name is holy, the other that of a poor bungler doing his best to interpret him."

At another time Kant said of Christ, "His is one of those names before which the heavens bow."

A study of Renan's work exalts one's reverence for Jesus. No man can read this book and not be conscious of the loftiest and tenderest sentiments toward the great Man of sorrows. One brief quotation will not be untimely here. Recording the death of Jesus, Renan says: "Rest now in thy glory, noble imitator. Thy work is completed, thy divinity is established. For thousands of years the world will extol thee. A thousand times more living, a thousand times more loved since thy death than

* *Works*, xi, p. 131; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, xiii, p. 670.

during thy pilgrimage here below, thou wilt become to such a degree the corner stone of humanity that to tear thy name from this world would be to shake it from its very foundations. Complete conqueror of death, take possession of thy kingdom."

Renan also said: "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; his legend [story] will call forth tears without end; his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts, and all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus."

Again Renan says of Christ: "A matchless man, so grand that, although here all must be judged from a purely scientific point of view, I would not gainsay those who, struck with the exceptional character of his work, call him God." *

Again: "Even to-day rationalism does not look at him closely except on its knees." †

De Wette, who furnished Theodore Parker and others with the weapons they used so industriously against Christianity, at the close of his Commentary, said: "Only this I know, in no other is there salvation, except in the name

* Renan's *Religious History and Criticism*, p. 161.

† *Ibid.*, p. 213.

of Jesus Christ and him crucified ; and for the human race there is nothing higher than the God-man realized in him and the kingdom of God planted by him."

II. The divinity of the system confessed.

Whatever other acknowledgments skeptics have made in their better moods, they have generally been very cautious not to concede the divinity of Christianity ; but even this point has been actually or virtually yielded in some remarkable instances.

How impressive the language of Rousseau ! On the side of his unbelief Rousseau may be regarded as a rationalistic deist, discarding the miraculous and some other primary peculiarities of Christianity ; and yet he was, at times, greatly impressed with the sublimity of the system and the lofty character of its Founder, and penned a passage seldom equaled for eloquence, which even concedes its divinity. In his *Émile*, his treatise on education, he said :

"I will confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers ; with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible are they compared with the Scriptures ! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime should be merely

the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred Personage whose history it contains should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manner; what an affecting gracefulness in his delivery; what sublimity in his maxims; what profound wisdom in his discourses; what presence of mind, what subtlety, what truth in his replies; how great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness and without ostentation?

.
“What prepossession, what blindness must it be to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the Son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion there is between them! Socrates, dying without pain or ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was anything more than a vain sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory or morals. Others, however, had before put them in practice. He had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precepts. Aristides had been

just before Socrates defined justice ; Leonidas had given up his life for his country before Socrates declared patriotism to be a duty ; the Spartans were a sober people before Socrates recommended sobriety ; before he had even defined virtue Greece abounded in virtuous men.

“The death of Socrates, peaceably philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for ; that of Jesus, expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, in receiving the poison, blessed, indeed, the weeping executioner who administered it ; but Jesus, in the midst of excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God. Shall we suppose the evangelic history in the Gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable, a mere invention ? Then the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.

“And yet the same Gospel is full of incredible things, of things opposed to reason, and which it is impossible for a sensible man to conceive or admit. But what shall I do amid such contradictions ? Remain modest and circum-

spect, my child ; respect in silence what we can neither reject nor comprehend, and be humble before the great Being who alone knows the truth." *

When Voltaire read this passage he was incensed against Rousseau for his reverence for Jesus, and cried out, "The Judas! the Judas! he deserts us when we are about to triumph."

Renan, like Rousseau, was a gushing writer, and both of them often exhibited a diverse, double consciousness. Renan made remarkable acknowledgments and exhibited high admiration for Jesus, even while applying to his life and teachings the sharp knife of merciless criticism. In one place he says, "The highest knowledge of God that ever existed in the bosom of humanity was that of Jesus."

Again he tells how Christ regarded himself: "The title Son of man expresses his rank as Judge ; that of Son of God, his participation in the plans and power of the Supreme Being. This power is unlimited. No one knoweth the Father but himself. He forgives sins ; he is superior to David, to Abraham, to Solomon, and to the prophets." He then proceeds to say: "We do not deny that in

* Book vi, *Works*, vol. ix (Geneva, 1782), pp. 147-151.

these affirmations existed the germ of the doctrine which subsequently made him a divine hypostasis and identified him with the Word."

Again he breaks out in the highest acknowledgment of Jesus: "He is the incomparable man, to whom universal conscience has decreed the title of the Son of God, and that with justice, for he gave to religion an impulse with which probably no other can be compared. Whatever is most excellent in every one of us we owe to him. He is more than a reformer of an obsolete religion: he is the center of the eternal religion of humanity.

"I have before me two witnesses, one of the first century, the other of the nineteenth; both trustworthy as to what they have seen, but of questionable authority in respect to what they have not seen. The one is St. John, to whom I will refer for the life of Jesus. The other is yourself, to whom I will refer for the work of Jesus, after the lapse of eighteen centuries. These two witnesses together make his divinity resplendent before my eyes."

Schelling died in 1854, having ranked in the first class of modern thinkers. A disciple of Fichte, and a friend and rival of Hegel for many years, he inculcated a system of panthe-

ism ranging from the idealistic to the realistic. In his later days his views underwent a considerable modification. Three years before his death, in a great assembly composed of the *élite* of Berlin, he frankly declared, "After all, our philosophy is only negative." About the same time he said to a friend that he had intended to prepare a book exhibiting the harmony of revelation and philosophy. When asked for the keynote of this harmony he went to his library and took down an old copy of the Greek Testament and read Rom. xi, 36: "For of him [Christ], and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." "There," said he, with simplicity, "is the foundation and the last word of philosophy. It is the Holy Scriptures that gives them to us." This is the mature thought of a man whose genius, learning, and philosophical ability no man can question. Abandoning the vain conceptions of pantheism, he adopted the saying attributed to Mirandola, "Philosophy seeks, Christianity possesses, the truth."

Peterborough, a distinguished English unbeliever, lodged one night with the devout Fénelon, at Cambray, and was so deeply impressed with his piety that he was constrained to say to a friend: "I must not stay in the presence of this holy man; if I do I shall be compelled

to renounce my infidelity. So much purity, so much amiableness, proves the reality of his religion, and proves that religion to be of heavenly origin."

Lecky says: * "The great characteristic of Christianity and the proof of its divinity is that it has been the main source of the moral development of Europe, and that it has discharged this office, not so much by the inculcation of a system of ethics, however pure, as by the assimilating and attractive influence of a perfect ideal. The moral progress of mankind can never cease to be distinctively and intensely Christian as long as it consists of a gradual approximation to the character of the Christian Founder. There is, indeed, nothing more wonderful in the history of the human race than the way in which that ideal has traversed the lapse of ages, acquiring new strength and beauty with each advance of civilization, and infusing its beneficent influence into every sphere of thought and action."

Again: † "Christianity, the life of morality, the basis of civilization, has regenerated the world."

Mr. John Stuart Mill affords another valuable concession: "The most valuable part of

* *History of European Morals*, i, p. 336, English edition.

† *Ibid.*, i, p. 205.

the effect on the character which Christianity has produced, by holding up in a divine Person a standard of excellence and a model for imitation, is available even to the absolute unbeliever, and can nevermore be lost to humanity. For it is Christ, rather than God, whom Christianity has held up to believers as the pattern of perfection for humanity. It is the God incarnate, more than the God of the Jews or of nature, who, being idealized, has taken so great and salutary a hold upon the modern mind."

Mr. Alcott has said: "An impersonal faith will not satisfy. A personal Mediator, uniting the human and the divine, alone suffices. Only as the Word becomes incarnate is the religious sentiment fairly addressed, the revelation cordial and complete."

What acknowledgments!

Of Rousseau: That it is "impossible that the Gospel should be merely the work of a man;" that there is an "infinite disproportion between Jesus and Socrates;" that if "the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a god."

Of Renan: That Christ was more than "a reformer"—"he is the center of the eternal religion of humanity;" that the life of Jesus and the effect of it on the world "make his divinity resplendent before our eyes."

Of Schelling: That "the Holy Scriptures give us the foundation and last word of philosophy," and that the words of St. Paul, "Of him [Christ], and through him, and to him, are all things," are "the keynote of the harmony of all truth."

Of John Stuart Mill: That "it is the God incarnate that has taken so great a hold upon the modern mind."

Of Mr. Alcott: That "a personal Mediator, uniting the human and the divine, alone suffices."

Of De Wette: That "there is nothing higher than the God-man realized in him [that is, Christ], and the kingdom of God planted in him."

Four Leading Vital Doctrines.

CHAPTER V.

FOUR LEADING VITAL DOCTRINES.

IN the discussions of the three preceding chapters we reached the conclusion that Christianity stands, like a magnificent temple, on a veritable historic basis, invested with moral grandeur, the center and source of the most potent uplifting and transforming influences the world ever saw, and bearing unmistakable marks of divinity—and all by the acknowledgments of its adversaries, in their better moods.

Let us now enter within the sacred precincts of this goodly temple and contemplate some of its interior pillars. We cannot take time to notice all of these interior columns; but there are four of them to which your attention is invited, which represent four great doctrines of Christianity:

The Deity of Christ;

The Expiatory Atonement;

Experimental Religion;

Future Rewards and Punishments.

These four doctrines are central and vital to the Christian system, as we understand it.

Yield these, and, with what will follow by implication, directly or indirectly, we have the whole Christian religion.

The doctrine of the deity of Christ involves the superhuman and supernatural elements of the Christian faith, with miracles, virtually his resurrection and ascension, his authority as a religious teacher, and the binding force of the religion which he founded for all time.

The doctrine of the expiatory atonement implies the moral government of God over men as moral beings, the sinful, helpless, and lost condition of the race, God's unalterable holiness and justice, and his wonderful compassion and love.

The doctrine of experimental religion implies the quickening, transforming, and renewing power of divine grace in the human soul, bringing men into new relations to God, elevating them into a new character and life, and sustaining them therein, all under the power of the Holy Spirit supernaturally exerted in them.

The doctrine of future rewards and punishments implies man's accountability, immortality, the judgment, etc.

With these four doctrines, therefore, we have the most vital and essential elements of Christianity. Without them we have only Christianity with Christianity left out.

These doctrines, in the form in which we state them, have been for the most part peculiar to the "evangelical" Churches; the "liberal" Churches, so called, so far as they hold them, accept them in a modified form, that leaves out what we regard as the most vital and effective operative elements.

But it is remarkable what important acknowledgments have been made, in regard to these most vital points, by those who have openly controverted them.

I. The Deity of Christ.

By this we mean, not that in some low or accommodated sense Christ is divine, as some have spoken of the divine Plato or the divine Socrates, but far more than this; we mean that in the fullest sense Christ was God—the God-man—that essential, unlimited deity was united with humanity in the extraordinary personage Christ Jesus. Touching this precise point we have remarkable acknowledgments from Unitarian sources.

Two gentlemen were once disputing on the divinity of Christ. One of them, who argued against it, said, "If it were true, it certainly would have been expressed in more clear, unequivocal terms." "Well," said the other, "admitting that you believed it, were you authorized to teach it, and allowed to use your own

language, how would you express the doctrine to make it clear and indubitable?" "I would say," replied the first, "that Jesus Christ is the true God." "You are happy," rejoined the other, "in the choice of your words, for you have happened to hit upon the very words of inspiration. St. John, speaking of Christ, says, 'This is the true God, and eternal life.'"

The acknowledgments we present are none of them from inferior, but from representative, men.

Rev. E. H. Sears, as editor of the *Monthly Religious Magazine*, of the Unitarian denomination, said :

"In days of darkest corruption, and amid the most awful wickedness of an apostate Church, there have been multitudes who have lived and died in the sanctity of a genuine faith. And what has been the doctrine that has laid hold upon them and saved them? We believe it will be found to have been the essential divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, offering the divine Person to the humble believer. This has been the saving element which no corruption could completely overlay."

Again, Mr. Sears says :

"That the doctrine of Christ's essential divinity is set forth in the New Testament—yea, that it breaks from its pages in a blaze of

glory—is the almost unanimous agreement of Christian believers. In the incarnation, the life, and the mediation of Christ, there is a full expression of the Godhead, the essential divinity coming down into visible personality for the salvation of men. Never are we invited to come to the Father by climbing round the personality of the Son. . . . That the essential divinity in Christ is not a person separated from the Father, another person, but consubstantial with the Father, and revealing the whole Godhead in one glorious Person, ‘all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,’ is plain even in the letter.”

Again, the same writer says :

“The radical Christology, the humanitarian, the Arian, the tripersonal—I know what they all are . . . and reject them. . . . I apprehend, too, the idea of what the Church calls ‘the hypostatic union;’ that is, the more interior union, an inexistence of natures, the divine with the human nature of Christ, . . . and which I must believe or set aside the Book of John.” *

Rev. James W. Thompson, D.D., an eminent Unitarian minister, in the *Christian Examiner*, a bimonthly magazine of that denomination, said :

“Does some prophet, seeing in him God

* In this extract the omissions are only personal allusions.

manifested, call him Immanuel? Verily, in him God is with us. Beholding in vision the miraculous establishment, the strength and wisdom, the peacefulness and perpetuity of the Messiah's reign, does he name him 'Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace?' Amen. The prophet cannot go beyond the historian; nay, the historian and the prophet meet in the mount of holy contemplation, using the same lofty imagery to invest with superhuman attributes the peerless object of their common admiration and praise. Glorifying in the regal majesty and dominion of his Lord, does some raptured saint, with his ear near to God, hear a 'voice from the excellent glory' addressing the Son: 'Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.' Even so, Amen. *Laudate Dominum.* We rejoice; we give thanks; we chant our response with the Church, and say, 'God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God;' not homoiousian with the Arians, but homoousian with the Athanasians; and none shall receive a heavier meaning from those divinely loaded words than we."

The *Christian Examiner*, the Unitarian periodical, makes a remarkable admission. An eloquent writer in this magazine is clear-sighted enough to perceive that the belief in the deity of Christ can not be eradicated from the human heart. He says:

“Again and again its defenses have been battered down and the doctrine itself logically demolished; yet somehow it has survived all its destructions. It is one of the oldest doctrines of the Church. Nine tenths of the strongest and best Christians that ever lived have believed it. It is connected with the great revivals of religion; it is as prominent in all light of modern science as in the darkest night of the Middle Ages, and is held to-day by the whole Christian world, Protestants as well as Roman Catholics, except a mere handful of liberals, as a most vital part of its religious faith. All past experiences show that to attack the Trinity, or, what is now becoming the chief point in the doctrine, the deity of Christ, on its logical side, is utterly in vain. It is clung to in the face of the clearest demonstrations of its untruth. It somehow feeds the soul, gives it fullness of the divine nature; and what avails it to prove by argument that the food is dust and ashes, when millions of beings are using it every day, and find it gives them health and strength?”

Why cannot this doctrine be eradicated from the human mind? For a double reason: the Bible manifestly teaches it, and the human heart needs it.

Rev. Samuel P. Putnam, D.D.,* an eminent Unitarian minister, said: "Not much is accomplished when it is proved that Jesus is not God. When we do this he ceases to be a central fact, a leader, a Saviour. Only God in his infinitude can be these; only he can satisfy our innermost needs. No finite being, however perfect and glorious, can do it."

II. The Atonement Vicarious and Expiatory.

Not that in some low sense Christ suffered for us vicariously—as a mother suffers for the child to which she gives birth, or the patriot suffers for his country—but that he stood in our stead, and died "the just for the unjust," and that his sufferings were an expiation for our sins; that Christ was the propitiation, not the mercy seat or the altar, but the propitiatory sacrifice.

This doctrine has been denounced by liberalists, so called, as "absurd," unworthy of acceptance by rational minds, and they have stigmatized it as "a blood theology;" but some of them, in better moods, have made generous concessions in favor of it.

* *Religious Monthly Magazine*, February, 1874, pp. 134, 136.

Gesenius, the eminent biblical scholar and author, who certainly cannot be accused of orthodox prejudices, writing upon Isa. liii, says: "Most Hebrew readers acquainted with offerings and substitution must necessarily understand the words of this chapter as asserting it; and there is no doubt that the apostolic representation, in respect to the propitiatory death of Christ, rests in a manner altogether preeminent on this ground."

An infidel once said to a Christian, "The idea that the blood of Christ can wash away sin is foolishness." The Christian replied, "You and St. Paul agree exactly." "How so?" asked the infidel. "In Corinthians Paul says, 'The preaching of the Gospel is to them that perish foolishness.'" The skeptic hung his head, studied the Bible, and became a Christian.

A writer in the *Christian Examiner* (Unitarian, 1856, vol. xv, p. 407, etc.) said: "The most earnest representations of the necessity and efficacy of the cross to the redemption of mankind which have ever come from an orthodox pulpit are fully sustained by the phraseology of the apostles. Whether the sacrificial terms they employed have been rightly understood or not, by those who have been most fond of borrowing them, the apostles, and not their

imitators, are responsible for the connection of those terms, and the peculiar ideas they suggest, with the Saviour's death. It is they who have called Christ 'our sacrifice,' a 'sin offering,' 'a propitiation for our sins.' It is they who have declared that 'he was made sin for us;' that he suffered for us, 'the just for the unjust;' that he 'died for all,' who else were virtually dead; that 'he hath purchased the Church with his own blood,' and that his 'blood cleanseth from all sin.' While these texts and such as these are found scattered over the New Testament—coloring, indeed, the whole current of its language—it should be remembered that the burden of proof rests upon those who would explain away their obvious meaning and divest the doctrine of the cross of the drapery which they have thrown around it. Nor is the responsibility in such a case to be lightly estimated, nor is the work undertaken an easy one. If in one instance the apparent sense of a text of the class alluded to is explained away, you are met directly by another which puts your critical ingenuity to a severer test; and when all is done that your hermeneutical skill can devise, the general tone of the New Testament still remains, interposing a new difficulty and weakening with common readers the force of your labored interpretations."

It has been currently reported that on one occasion Rev. T. Starr King frantically exclaimed, "Away with your blood religion!" And yet this eminent representative of the so-called "liberal" religion was a man of a broad and generous nature, of noble moods, sometimes showing rare magnanimity toward his opponents. In his installation sermon at the settlement of Rev. E. H. Chapin, D.D., in New York city, he uttered a glowing eulogium* upon "the expiatory system." After setting forth in the strongest terms the doctrine of the atonement, as held in orthodox Churches, and dissenting from it, he nevertheless proceeded to pronounce upon it the most eloquent eulogium ever printed. He said:

"It is ennobled by the holiest memories, as it has been consecrated by the loftiest talent of Christendom. It fired the fierce eloquence of Tertullian in the early Church, and gushed in honeyed periods from the lips of Chrysostom; it enlisted the lifelong zeal of Athanasius to keep it pure; the sublimity of it fired every power and commanded all the resources of the mighty soul of Augustine; the learning of Jerome and the energy of Ambrose were com-

* Published in full in the *Liberal Christian*, March 30, 1867.

mitted to its defense ; it was the text for the subtle eye and analytic thought of Aquinas ; it was the pillar for Luther's soul toiling for man ; it was shaven into intellectual proportions and systematic symmetry by the iron logic of Calvin ; it inspired the beautiful humility of Fénelon ; fostered the devotion and self-sacrifice of Oberlin ; flowed like molten metal into the rigid forms of Edwards's intellect, and kindled the deep and steady rapture of Wesley's heart.

“ And while this expiatory system of the Gospel is venerable for its age and the long list of splendid minds which it has educated, and which are still the ornaments of the Church, it is equally imposing when we reflect upon the labors and schemes which it has quickened and generated for spreading the knowledge and power of the Gospel in the world. Its advocates have felt the impulse of every motive to ardent and constant zeal which the love of Christ and humanity could inspire. The philanthropy which delights to raise men from ignorance and pour around them the light of truth and encouragement to virtue has been trebly quickened by the feeling of the awful consequences which must follow their continued ignorance of God and the appointed means of redemption from human infirmity

and sin. All the great enterprises of Christian history have been born from the influence, immediate or remote, which this vicarious theory of redemption has exercised upon the mind and heart of humanity. . . . The man who has faith in it must be a maniac or a missionary. . . . It has linked itself with mighty energy to the long, deeply freighted train of human interests. . . .

“It is to the burning zeal which the terrors connected with the expiatory view of the Gospel inspired that we owe the thousand-handed labors of the modern Church, taxing our wealth and using with cunning arts all the appliances of mechanical invention for the instruction of the ignorant and the heathen and the wider diffusion of the word of God. It is to this that we owe the printing of the Bible in the Cherokee and Choctaw tongues; it is this which has sent missionaries to the Hindus and the Hottentots, in their own speech, to talk of Jesus; has built chapels to the Mediator on the shores of the Oregon and the Amazon; which hung the cross as the sign of redemption in the Arctic and the Antarctic sky; which has made the Andes and the Himalayas echo to trinitarian prayers, and planted the banner of the Gospel on the banks of the Ganges and the Nile.”

In view of the preceding concessions it is not strange that Rev. F. D. Huntington, D.D.,* on leaving the Unitarian Church, should say that the views held by liberalists "stand convicted as inadequate and unscientific by the facts, unphilosophical by the reason, jejune by the religious affections, and unhistorical by the past, while they put upon the Gospel itself the aspect of a stupendous self-misunderstanding. The profounder, richer, and more inspiring doctrine, however imperfectly set forth as yet in any extrascriptural statement, lies at the heart of the New Testament, has its majestic foreshadowings in the Old, and has given its historic impulse to the life of the Church."

In a recent issue of the *British Weekly* the Rev. John Watson, pastor of the Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, who is better known as "Ian Maclaren," tells the following about Matthew Arnold:

"Matthew Arnold's brother-in-law, Mr. Cropper, attended our church, and that was how he came to be in the church on that Sunday. It was sacrament morning, and I preached on the 'Shadow of the Cross.' We afterward sang the hymn,

'When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died.'

* *Monthly Religious Magazine*, vol. xx, p. 367.

"Mr. Arnold left before the communion and went home. As he came down stairs from his bedroom to lunch a servant, who was close to the dining room door, heard him saying softly to himself the first lines of the hymn. . . . At luncheon Mr. Arnold spoke about the hymn, which, he said, was the finest in the English language. Afterward he went out and in ten minutes was dead."

III. Experimental Religion.

By experimental religion we mean that a divinely wrought experience, or spiritual change, is begotten in truly believing souls, lifting them up into higher possibilities of character, of comfort, and of life, than unaided human nature could attain unto; and this experience flows from the gracious efficacy of Christ's death to those who personally accept him as their Saviour.

Such an experience has been stigmatized as an "hallucination of the fancy," "a phantasm." But even those who have thus discarded and reproached it have sometimes made generous acknowledgments in favor of it.

The *Religious Monthly Magazine* (Unitarian, 1860, vol. xxiii, pp. 106-8), said: "It is a personal vital union of the disciple with his Saviour that causes the divine life to pass into him and transform him into the divine

image, and produce, from within, outwardly, not a putative, but a genuine, righteousness. When we are weak or cowardly in the face of duty, or braced up only by the pride of self or the fear of man, it is rest in that almighty friendship that gives both the docility of a child and the strength of a multitude of martyrs. There is other virtue that is hardy and brave, austere, and sometimes cruel, for the cause and glory of God. This, from the living and indwelling Christ, has both the tenderness and omnipotence of Him who breathes it into us; for its strain of acknowledgment is, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." This . . . has been the renewing power of Christianity, and wrought all the graces, and the righteousness, and the zeal, and the piety distinctively Christian; for this is where God meets the soul and has his tabernacle with men. This is the door through which he comes and floods the heart with his strength and love. This made Methodism a saving and regenerating power, while the other Churches lay high and dry on the sands of faith alone. It works the deepest and richest Christian experience. It breathes and quivers through Moravian hymns. It shows man all the depths and windings of his depravity, and in the same measure supplies

God's inexhaustible grace. It gives him the peace that flows like a river and fertilizes all his nature, as earthly fountains are becoming dry. It gives the Christian Church all the efficiency which it has for positive good in the world."

An eminent lawyer, skeptical in relation to Christianity, who seldom or never entered the house of God, was passing by a Methodist church one evening. He heard singing; it arrested his attention, and he concluded he would look in and see what was going on. He entered the house of prayer, drawn by the sweet notes of sacred song, and took his seat in the back part of the congregation. It turned out to be a love feast, and there was a large congregation present. He listened with the most profound attention. After the service had opened a gentleman got up whom he knew very well—a respectable merchant in that city—and began to tell his experience. He said: "So many years ago I was a poor, careless, thoughtless young man; proud, haughty, and empty-headed too; but the Spirit of God arrested me; I was brought to think seriously of my condition, was convinced that I was a poor sinner, and felt that if I died as I was then I would be damned forever. I made up my mind to seek God. I

sought and found him." And, with streaming eyes, he declared that at that moment he realized the comfortable assurance of his acceptance with God, and sat down. Presently a physician, with whom this gentleman was intimate, rose and gave his testimony concerning the same experience, the same blessed fact; and a lawyer, who had pleaded with him many a time at the same bar, arose in another part of the house and bore witness to the same fact—not to theory, but testified that the grace of God had saved him and had made him then and there to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And so it went round the congregation. After a little the negroes in the gallery began to speak, and one old patriarch, with his head white, trembling upon the verge of the grave, bore testimony to the same fact in his broken, simple accents, that God had had mercy upon him and written his name in heaven. Then another rose, and another, until some forty witnesses declared in various phrases to this great truth, that they had sought the Saviour, that he had pardoned their sins, had taken away the fear of death, and that they were then reconciled to God and heirs of everlasting life.

The lawyer said to himself, "Well, what can I do with this?" He understood the point.

Said he: "I have not a witness in the universe that I can bring to rebut that testimony. Here are forty witnesses to one single fact, and I have been rejecting the counsel of God all my life." He looked around him and said: "Argument, philosophy, and sophistry cannot do it; they are witnesses to a fact. There must be truth in it; I cannot gainsay it; there is not one of these men who have spoken here to-night whose testimony would be refused for one moment in a court of justice, and the testimony of any one or two of them would hang the best man in this community of crime if they should testify of his guilt." He said, "They have testified not of a theory, but of a fact." The result was that he yielded his heart to God, experienced the same change, and became a witness too.

At the anniversary of the Free Religious Association, in 1867, Colonel T. W. Higginson, referring to the religion of the southern negroes, said: "I have seen many a southern freedman, with his quaint songs and half-pagan dances, which half of the hearers in this room would think more convivial than moral; and yet I have seen, trained upon that poor diet, exhibitions of spiritual strength which the noblest of you might be proud to emulate." *

Near the close of his *Life of Jesus* Renan

* Report, p. 51.

says: "Marcus Aurelius left behind an execrable son, beautiful books, and a transitory world ; but Jesus remains to the world an inexhaustible source of moral regeneration. Philosophy is not enough for the masses ; it requires sanctity. Jesus is that individual who has caused his species to make the greatest advances toward the divine."

Rev. T. Starr King, in a discourse * on the expiatory view of the atonement, speaks in most eloquent language of the spiritual experience which follows its acceptance. He says :

"Think of the emotions which this system inspires in the intense believer's heart. What lowly humility, what unbending pride ! What horror, and what ecstasy ! What fear of God, and what love of Jesus ! What pity for the unconscious sinner, what flinty sternness toward the Redeemer's willful foes ! The meanest souls, who, according to the expiatory system, imagine they have obtained salvation, if they only appreciate the meaning of the word, are conscious of an experience which none of us can know, and which language is too feeble to express.

"On the rich and the eloquent, the noble and the priest, they may look down with contempt ; for they may esteem themselves rich in

* *Liberal Christian*, March 30, 1867.

a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language ; nobles by right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. Nothing is so well fitted to inspire a settled and stubborn stoicism toward all temporal interests and fascinations of earthly life. What distinctions can charm the senses of a spirit confident that its name is written in the Book of Life, and seeing before it the glories of a sternly guarded paradise ? What terrors can frighten the heart that has been delivered from the fiery surges of Tartarus ? What servility can bend the knees to any earthly degradation which have been raised in triumph from before the eternal throne ? What horrors can be heeded for a moment by the soul that has stood beneath the awful cross and felt the consecrating bloody baptism from the wounded brow and the opened side of a dying God ? Surely nothing in paganism ever reached such depths of the soul as this !

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 “ And surely no set of religious emotions, so original, so strong and pure, were ever awakened in the human soul as those which the expiatory scheme infused into the heart of humanity ; and surely no vision born from the poetic fancy or the deep religious reverence of any people, to be enshrined in the mythology of the world,

can equal the Christian conception of the infinite Redeemer in his heavenly glory for a fallen race."

IV. Future Rewards and Punishments.

There have been many stiff denials of the various phases of the doctrine of retribution, and as many remarkable acknowledgments, under every phase of the question. It is indeed surprising how differently men have talked about it.

There are some singular freaks of human nature even in theological matters. What men most loudly say is sometimes the most lucid confession that they really believe the opposite. Hence Josh Billings's pungent satire: "What a man iz the most afraid of he sez he don't believe in; this may ackount for some men's unbelief in hell."

Several things may be regarded as almost universally conceded:

1. That as moral beings we live under an administration of rewards and punishments. I know of no one who denies this proposition, only some may have a choice whether the term "punishment," "discipline," or "retribution" should be used. That, however, is only a question about terms, nothing more.

2. That this law of retribution reaches into the future world is also almost universally allowed.

The old doctrine of Rev. Hosea Ballou, that all the consequences of sin are confined to this life, and that all, at death, go immediately to heaven, is not now taught in any pulpit of any denomination.

3. The fearfulness of future retribution is also acknowledged. Rev. W. E. Channing, D.D., said: *

“After death character will produce its full effect. . . . The circumstances which in this life prevent vice, sin, wrongdoing, from inflicting pain will not operate hereafter. There the evil mind will be exposed to its own terrible agency, and nothing, nothing will interfere between the transgressor and his own awakened conscience. . . . In the present life we have the means of escaping, amusing, and forgetting ourselves. . . . Sleep is a function of our present animal frame; but let not the transgressor anticipate this boon in the world of retribution before him. It may be, and he has reason to fear, that, in that state, repose will not weigh down his eyelids, that conscience will not slumber there, that day and night the same reproaching voice is to cry within, that unrepented sin is to fasten its unrelaxing grasp on the ever-wakeful soul. . . . It seems to me

* Channing's *Works* (American Unitarian Association, 1872), vol. iv, pp. 162-165.

probable that, in the future, the whole creation will, through sin, be turned into a source of suffering, and will perpetually throw back the evil mind on its own transgressions. . . . One, and only one, evil can be carried from this world to the next, and that is the evil within us, moral evil, guilt, crime, ungoverned passion. The depraved mind, the memory of a wasted or ill-spent life, the character which has grown up under neglect of God's voice in his word and in the soul—this, this will go with us to stamp itself on our future frames, to darken our future being, to separate us like an impassable gulf from our Creator and from pure and happy beings, to be as a consuming fire and an undying worm."

Such were the words of the celebrated Dr. Channing.

Rev. Orville Dewey, D.D., spoke* with great emphasis on this subject:

"The great evil attending the common statements of this doctrine, I shall now venture to say, is not that they are too alarming. Men are not enough alarmed at the dangers of a sinful course. No men are; no men, though they sit under the most terrifying dispensation of preaching that ever was devised."

Rev. Dr. W. G. Eliot, for many years pas-

* *Works*, vol. ii, 70, 71.

tor of the Unitarian church in St. Louis,* said:

“I would not lessen the fear which sin brings to the guilty man. It cannot be too great, so long as it is calm and rational, arising from our knowledge of the ruin which sin brings upon the soul now and the dread of what it may do hereafter. The terms used in the Scripture, though strongly figurative, are not unmeaning words. We may divest ourselves of the horror which their literal interpretation would convey, but we cannot set them aside. The Saviour, in adopting as the expression for the punishment of the wicked a word so full of terror as the valley of Hinnom, took the surest way of declaring that the sorrow of the sinful soul hereafter is beyond the power of tame words to describe.

“Figurative language is used to convey greater strength and intensity of meaning. Are we yet so ignorant as not to know, so brutish as not to understand, that there is no torture of these frail sinews, no agony which can be brought on this crumbling body, so dreadful as the rising of an abused conscience to assert its stern dominion over the guilty soul? . . . If we wished to picture to our-

* *Discourses on the Doctrines of Christianity* (American Unitarian Association, 1873), pp. 162, 163.

selves the real climax of suffering, it would be to place the soul, not in outward fire, but in the midst of beauty and external delight, with this curse upon it—that neither day nor night should the serpent's teeth of remorse cease to gnaw and devour. That curse would convert all things into instruments of torture, and outward flames would not be wanting to increase the woe."

Such are some of the vivid portrayals of the sufferings of the wicked in the state of retribution by eminent representatives of modern liberal sentiment.

4. No warrant for restorationism in the Bible. We now approach a phase of this subject about which there is more dispute; I refer to the question of the endlessness of retribution. A large number of "liberalists," so called, who believe in future retribution, claim, nevertheless, that it will not be endless, but that all souls will, after a time, be recovered to holiness and heaven.

A part of this class, however, acknowledge that there is no warrant in the Bible for any such hope of recovery. I present three remarkable testimonies of this class:

In a statement of faith by the American Unitarian Association, in 1853, we find the following:

“It is our firm conviction that the final restoration of all is not revealed in the Scriptures, but that the ultimate fate of the impenitent wicked is left enshrouded in impenetrable obscurity so far as the total declarations of the sacred writings are concerned;” and yet they go on to say that they nevertheless “hold to the doctrine of the final universality of salvation as a consistent speculation of the reason and a strong belief of the heart.” “Those of us who believe (as a large majority of us do) in the final recovery of all souls, therefore, cannot emphasize it in the foreground of their preaching as a sure part of Christianity, but only elevate it in the background of their system as a glorious hope,” etc.

Rev. T. Starr King, in a discourse delivered in the Hollis Street Church, Boston, in 1858, made the following frank confession :

“I freely say that I do not find the doctrine of the ultimate salvation of all souls clearly stated in any text or in any discourse that has been reported from the lips of Christ. I do not think we can fairly maintain that the final restoration of all men is a prominent and explicit doctrine of the four gospels. We needlessly narrow the grounds of opposition to sacrificial orthodoxy by attacking it from such a position.”

But he says that he thinks that the doctrine of eternal punishment is opposed to the principles of Jesus, as he construes them, and he also says that "this doctrine is, to my mind, dreadful and monstrous—at war with our constitutional instincts of justice and charity." The ground of his opposition to it is his own heart.

Rev. Theodore Parker, in a response to an inquiry of Rev. Nehemiah Adams, D.D., in 1858, made the following acknowledgment:

"To me it is quite clear that Jesus Christ taught the doctrine of eternal damnation, if the evangelists—the first three, I mean—are to be treated as inspired. I can understand his language in no other way." But he then adds that he rejects the doctrine, nevertheless, "because it is so revolting to the humane and moral feelings of our nature."

5. No hope on philosophical grounds. Can the final recovery of all souls, then, be expected on philosophical grounds? is the question which remains.

If so, then it must be through one of three methods: (1) Because punishment is reformatory; or (2) as a triumph of almighty love; or (3) as a triumph of almighty power.

Eminent thinkers have conceded that there is no hope from either of these sources.

1. As to the effect of punishment, Hon. Edmund Burke said: "The infliction of penalty has no tendency to reform the guilty."

Rev. F. H. Hedge, D.D., in the *Christian Examiner*,* said:

"It does not appear that punishment in this world has always the effect, or has in the majority of cases the effect, to reform the sinner; contrariwise, it is notorious that men continue to sin and suffer to the day of their death. What authority have we for supposing that this process is arrested hereafter, or for not supposing that the sinner will go on sinning and suffering everlastingly, or till evil becomes so predominant in the soul as utterly to quench its moral life, and conscious suffering ends in everlasting death? Who shall say that sin, once established, may not grow to be supreme and ineradicable; that the habit of transgression contracted in this world, and confirmed by every fresh transgression, may not become a necessity of nature, strong as fate and deep as life?"

2. As to the triumph of almighty love, Dr. F. H. Hedge says this theory "supposes a too forcible interference of almighty love in the normal processes of the human soul, bringing the divine into self-collision." It "assumes an inevitable triumph of self-recovery, a fatality

* July, 1859, pp. 104, 105.

of goodness in man which seems to be based on no analysis of human nature, which certainly is not warranted by any mundane experience, and whose only voucher, so far as we can see, is a brave hope which, however honorable to those who cherish it, is of no great use in the critical investigation of the subject. . . . There are some to whom the very attractiveness of such a doctrine may seem a sufficient warrant of its truth. We have no wish to disturb their faith; but this ground of conviction, however influential in private experience, is hardly available at the bar of critical inquiry."

Rev. William G. Eliot, D.D.,* said:

"Although there are some hints given of a final restoration of all things, and although our belief in the paternal goodness of God seems to lead to the same result, yet there are obvious difficulties in the way. By the nature of the soul, its return to goodness must be voluntary. It cannot be compelled, even for its own benefit, without a destruction of its best capacities.

"The same voluntary resistance to God which is begun here may therefore continue through unknown ages, and we have no right to expect that God will ever impose upon us a

* *Doctrines of Christianity* (published by American Unitarian Association, 1873), p. 166.

necessity of being good. It is therefore a fearful risk which we run in suffering ourselves to become more and more hardened in sin. We do not know how far the capacity of goodness may die. We do not know but that we may separate ourselves so far from God as to make our return impossible. Such thoughts are well calculated to awaken fear and trembling. The immortal soul is not to be trifled with, and those who bury it under sin are incurring a risk greater, perhaps, than we can understand."

In another place (page 164), after saying that there is a seeming inconsistency between endless retribution and the benevolence of God, he adds: "But, on the other hand, we should remember that our knowledge of the divine attributes, and of the real claims of justice and mercy, is very limited. God seeth not as man seeth, for he sees the whole, and man only a part. It may therefore appear that many things which seem to us inconsistent with God's love are, in fact, its most perfect exercise."

3. This question remains, Will all souls be recovered to virtue and heaven by the triumphant exercise of almighty power?

A writer in the *Christian Examiner** said:

"We cannot imagine anything like compulsion in one mind acting upon another. We

* July, 1830, pp. 397, 398.

cannot make our child receive knowledge. We can use compulsion upon his body; we can bind him to his book; but it is evident that compulsion cannot reach the mind. The difficulty is that men have felt as if moral power were no power at all; as if to deny that God acts on men by compulsion were the same thing as taking his sovereignty away. But our ideas of divine power should at least be borrowed from the highest human power we know. We accordingly find that the energy God exerts upon the human mind is different from that he exerts upon the senseless elements of nature. We find that in Christianity, called 'the power of God,' he employs argument, inducement, and persuasion, which, men are just beginning to discover, are the most stupendous forces which can be brought to bear upon the mind, and yet exert no more compulsion to bend it in one direction or another than the moonlight shadow across the brook exerts to stop the flowing of the waters. We would speak reverently of the divine perfections. All we say is that we can conceive of no power which can break up this order of nature; no power which can make him rest from labor who has refused to labor; no power which can make him who has refused to be holy enjoy that happiness which nothing but holiness

brings. These things seem to be no subjects of power."

Rev. F. H. Hedge, D.D., said :

"The most distinguished of American philanthropists, with large experience with human nature and reformatory discipline, expressed to us, in a recent conversation, the conviction that some natures are beyond the reach of moral influence—proof against all discipline—moral incurables. What reason to expect a moral revolution in such characters hereafter? If any derived from the nature of the human soul, let psychology declare it. The divine mercy? It is easy to talk of divine mercy, but the question is here of divine power. The question is of possibility—whether omnipotence itself can reform such characters without so violating their idiosyncrasy, without so traversing their normal developments, as in effect to destroy their identity, and whether it would not better comport with divine economy to substitute at once another soul. A conversion which, instead of developing a native good, should impose a foreign one, would not be a reformation, but a *metakitzosis*, a transubstantiation. But we are supposing a case in which there is no good to be developed, if not a case of entire depravity—the existence of such cases may be denied—yet a case in which the will is

irrecoverably divorced from good and bent on evil. Schiller describes the hero of 'The Robbers' by saying that he would not pray, if once so resolved, though God should appeal to him in person with the offer of immediate heavenly bliss. We fancy this conceit expresses a possibility of human nature. We suspect that Milton's Satan is no vain imagination—that the soul may arrive at a point of antagonism, where the pride of selfhood shall resist all appeals, and a self-centered willfulness shall say, 'Evil, be thou my good.' When that period is reached we can see no remedy, no way of restoration that would not compromise the soul's integrity. Yet even those cases are scarcely more hopeless than those of weak and unstable souls, swift to repent, and equally swift to transgress anew, whose existence oscillates between contrition and indulgence. The moral influences which recoil from the solid resistance of the former character glide infructuous from the smooth facility of these.

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"God will have all men to be saved in the sense in which he wills that all fruit germs shall become fruits, and all human embryos well-formed, healthy men and women. But this destination is not always accomplished; resistance or defect in the stuff, collision of forces,

or what not, produces abortions in the one case; and defect or contradiction of the will may produce them in the other. The world of souls may have its failures as well as the world of forms."

Thus we see that each of these four great doctrines, which stand as interior columns of the Christian system, have been vindicated by the testimonies of men who have at times stood opposed to them.

**The Innermost Central Column of the
Christian System Vindicated by its
Enemies.**

CHAPTER VI.

THE INNERMOST CENTRAL COLUMN OF THE
CHRISTIAN SYSTEM VINDICATED BY ITS ENEMIES.

STILL penetrating within the goodly precincts of the Christian temple, we next concentrate upon its most vital center, upon which, more than upon anything else, the past of Christianity has depended and the future must depend.

This central column is the soul-satisfying power of Christianity, that Christianity wonderfully satisfies the spiritual necessities of our being.

So fundamental is this truth that without it Christianity would never be desired. We would have only Christianity with Christianity left out. It would be like the play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out.

But if this fact be proved, that Christianity wonderfully satisfies the human soul in its deepest needs, then, whatever of criticism or opposition it may encounter, it can neither be put down nor outgrown, but it will live and triumph forever.

All this we propose to stake upon the acknowledgments of our adversaries, and those who have stood apart from any profession of the Christian religion. I ask attention to two classes of acknowledgments, one general, and the other specific.

I. We have the acknowledgments of skeptics that the Bible satisfies the spiritual necessities, and that, in this regard, no other book can equal it.

Rousseau, our first witness, was a man of varied moods, vibrating between the most radical skepticism and a quasi assent to the ethics of Christianity. In one of his letters to Deleyre, a disciple of Diderot, he said:

“I shudder to witness your continual attempts against religion. Dear Deleyre, distrust your tendency to satire. Learn, at all events, to reverence religion; humanity itself demands it. The great, the rich, the happy, would be delighted to hear that there is no God; but the expectation of another life is, in this, the only consolation of the commonalty and the afflicted. What cruelty to exclude them from that hope!”*

Thomas Carlyle, whose peculiar transcendental and pantheistic attitude is well known, said

* *Boyle Lectures*, by Rev. William Harness, 1821, vol. ii, p. 148.

of the Bible: "In the poorest cottages are books; is one book, wherein for several thousands of years the spirit of man has found light and nourishment, and an interpreting response to whatever is deepest in him; wherein still, to this day, for the eye that will look well, the mystery of existence reflects itself, if not resolved, yet revealed, and prophetically emblemed; if not to the satisfying of the outward sense, yet to the opening of the inward sense, which is the far grander result."

That brilliant writer, Matthew Arnold, whose freedom of criticism ranks him among the destructive rationalists of our day, makes a very remarkable acknowledgment as to the value of the Bible in meeting the vital needs of the soul.* He says: "To the Bible men will return because they cannot do without it; because happiness is our being's end and aim, and happiness belongs to righteousness, and righteousness is revealed in the Bible. For this simple reason men will return to the Bible, just as a man who tried to give up food, thinking it was a vain thing, and that he could do without it, would return to food; or a man who tried to give up sleep, thinking it was a vain thing, and he could do without it, would return to sleep."

* *Literature and Dogma* (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1873), p. 340.

In his *Last Essays* Mr. Arnold said that the precepts of Christianity, if obeyed, will bring the most complete happiness in this world, without reference to the future world. Hence he thinks Christianity has a future.

Near the close of his *Literature and Dogma*,* Mr. Arnold says : “ Finally, and above all. As for the right inculcation of righteousness we need the inspiring words of Israel’s love for it, that is, we need the Bible ; so for the right inculcation of the method and secret of Jesus we need the *epieikeia*, the sweet reasonableness of Jesus. That is, in other words again, we need the Bible ; for only through the Bible records of Jesus can we get at his *epieikeia*. Even in these records it is and can be presented but imperfectly ; but only by reading and rereading the Bible can we get at it at all.”

“ It is said that the late Charles Reade, of England, the eminent novelist, was led to study the Old Testament by a remark of the late famous Matthew Arnold, the remark being, according to a writer in the *Andover Review*, in these words : ‘ The old Bible is getting to be to us literary men of England a sealed book. We may think we know it. We were taught it at home. We heard it read in church. Perhaps we can quote some verse, or even passage ;

* P. 378 (London edition, Smith, Elder & Co., 1873).

but we really know very little of it. I wish, Reade, that you would take up the Old Testament and go through it as though every page of it were altogether new to you—as though you had never read a line of it before. I think it will astonish you.’ Mr. Reade did so. He entered upon the task with such a zeal as characterized his other work. The result was he not only became astonished at his discoveries, but the study led to his conversion. He opened his heart to the truths and lessons of the Old Testament and found that they were full of a mighty, convincing power, before which he humbly bowed, and by which he was brought into the kingdom of which the prophets foretold with graphic interest and eloquence. And there are many to-day who, if they would devoutly search those ancient Scriptures, would find them the power of God, unto salvation.” *

Professor Huxley, whose materialistic attitude will shield him from any suspicion of bias for the Christian religion or its books, in an address upon education, said: “I have always been strongly in favor of secular education, in the sense of education without theology; but I must confess I have been no less seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential

* C. H. Wetherbe, in *The Presbyterian*.

basis of conduct, was to be kept up, in the present utterly chaotic state of opinion on these matters, without the use of the Bible. The pagan moralists lack life and color; and even the noble Stoic, Marcus Aurelius, is too high and refined for an ordinary child. Take the Bible as a whole; make the severest deduction which fair criticism can dictate for shortcomings and positive errors; eliminate, as a sensible lay teacher would do, if left to himself, all that is not desirable for children to occupy themselves with, and there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral grandeur. And then consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain, and is familiar to noble and simple, from John O'Groat's to Land's End, as Dante and Tasso were once to the Italians; that it is written in the noblest and purest English and abounds in exquisite beauties of a merely literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind, who never left his village, to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other books

could children be so much humanized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between the two eternities?"

Rev. Brooke Herford, after quoting the foregoing, added: "It is always refreshing to hear a word for religion or for the Bible from one who has not a particle of professional feeling or superstitious reverence for either. And this is a noteworthy word, that for conduct we need religion, and for religion we need the Bible. Here you have the whole thing in a nutshell."

Theodore Parker has spoken and written some of the most bitter words against the Bible; and yet, in his better moods, he penned one of the finest encomiums upon the Bible ever written, the chief value of which is its acknowledgment that the Bible meets the most vital and varied needs of the human soul. He said:

"The Bible is read of a Sunday in all the thirty thousand pulpits of our land. In all the temples of Christendom is its voice lifted up week by week. The sun never sets on its gleaming page. It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholar and colors the talk of the street. The bark of

the merchant cannot sail the seas without it ; no ship of war goes to the conflict but the Bible is there. It enters men's closets, mingles in all the grief and cheerfulness of life. The affianced maiden prays God in Scripture for strength in her new duties ; men are married by Scripture. The Bible attends them in their sickness ; when the fever of the world is on them the aching head finds a softer pillow if its leaves lie underneath. The mariner, escaping from shipwreck, clutches this first of his treasures, and keeps it sacred to God. It goes with the peddler in his crowded pack, cheers him at eventide when he sits down dusty and fatigued, and brightens the freshness of his morning face. It blesses us when we are born, gives names to half Christendom, rejoices with us, has sympathy with our mourning, tempers our grief to finer issues. It is the better part of our sermons. It lifts man above himself ; our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech, wherewith our fathers and the patriarchs prayed. The timid man, about awakening from this dream of life, looks through the glass of Scripture, and his eye grows bright ; he does not fear to stand alone, to tread the way, unknown and distant, to take the death angel by the hand and bid farewell to wife and babes and home. Men rest on this their dearest hopes."

Mr. Lecky* accounts for the triumph of Christianity in the old Roman world on the ground that it peculiarly met the spiritual needs of the soul. He says :

“No other religion had ever combined so many distinct elements of power and attraction. Unlike the Jewish religion, it was bound by no local ties, and was equally adapted to every nation and to every class. Unlike stoicism, it appealed in the strongest manner to the affections, and offered all the charm of a sympathetic worship. Unlike the Egyptian religion, it united with its distinctive teaching a pure and noble system of ethics, and proved itself capable of realizing it in action. It proclaimed, amid a vast movement of social and national amalgamation, the universal brotherhood of mankind. Amid the softening influence of philosophy and civilization it taught the supreme sanctity of love. To the slave, who had never before exercised so large an influence over Roman religious life, it was the religion of the suffering and the oppressed. To the philosopher it was at once the echo of the highest ethics of the later Stoics, and the expansion of the best teaching of the school of Plato. . . . To a world that had grown very weary, gazing on the cold, passionless grandeur

* *History of European Morals*, vol. i, pp. 412, 413.

which Cato realized, and which Lucan sang, it presented an ideal of compassion and of love—an ideal destined for centuries to draw around it all that was greatest, as well as all that was noblest, upon earth—a Teacher who could weep by the sepulcher of his friend and who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. To a world, in fine, distracted by hostile creeds and colliding philosophies, it taught its doctrines, not as a human speculation, but as a divine revelation, authenticated much less by reason than by faith. ‘With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;’ ‘He that doeth the will of my Father will know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.’ . . . The chief cause of its success was the congruity of its teaching with the spiritual nature of mankind. It was because it was true to the moral sentiments of the age, because it represented faithfully the supreme type of excellence to which men were then tending, because it corresponded with their religious wants and aims and emotions, because the whole spiritual being could then expand and expatiate under its influence, that it planted its roots so deeply in the hearts of men.”

I have thus presented frank acknowledgments from six prominent gentlemen in the highest ranks of skeptical thought—Rousseau,

Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Huxley, Theodore Parker, and Lecky—that the Bible meets the most vital needs of the human soul. These are all general statements of what Christianity does.

It is now pertinent to inquire for something more specific. What crucial tests can be cited which will demonstrate that Christianity affords this wonderful satisfaction to the soul? This brings us to notice other testimonies, as:

II. Crucial tests of the soul-satisfying power of Christianity, our enemies being judges.

We ask, then, what are the times of special need in human experience, the phases of life in which human souls are most painfully and severely tried?

I. We are all familiar with the misfortunes, reverses, and bereavements of this life, and the supreme ordeal of all human experiences, the death season. Does the Christian religion meet the soul's necessities in these trying experiences? And to what an extent have men professedly outside of Christianity acknowledged that Christianity is adequate to these necessities?

It is not difficult to demonstrate that in these times of need, when other systems show their poverty and fail, that Christianity satisfies and achieves her brightest triumphs.

Some of the more courageous skeptics have attempted to push their theories to practical results, in order to show that their systems are capable of meeting the deeper needs of humanity, but their efforts have only led to constrained or implied confessions. In October, 1872, a writer in the *Westminster Review* undertook to estimate the ability of the current materialistic philosophy to console and elevate human life. Its incentives and comforts to cultivated minds were portrayed with feeble vanishing touches; the stern necessities of humanity were overlooked, and the article closed with seemingly conscious dissatisfaction.

The materialistic theories of Schopenhauer and Hartmann would eclipse the universe. Dr. Strauss lived to see the unsatisfactory character of his theories, as is evident from his *Ein Bekenntniss* (A Confession).

Thoreau, in one of his peculiar moods, complained of the failure of his pantheistic worship to satisfy the deepest needs of his consciousness, and in plaintive lines expressed his sadness:

“Amid such boundless wealth without,
I only still am poor within :
The birds have served their summer out,
But still my spring does not begin.”

Full of significance are also these lines of Matthew Arnold :

“ The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain ;
And we are here, as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorance armies close by night.”

Frederick Harrison, once reckoned as a disciple of Comte, has forcibly shown the inadequacy of the agnosticism of Spencer, and also of Comte's religion of humanity.

“ In the hour of pain, danger, and death,” says Mr. Harrison, “ can anyone think of the Unknowable, hope anything of the Unknowable, or find any consolation therein? . . . A mother wrung with agony for the loss of her child, or the wife crushed by the death of her children's father, or the helpless and the oppressed, the poor and the needy, men, women,

and children, in sorrow, doubt, and want, longing for something to comfort them and to guide them, something to believe in, to hope for, to love and to worship, they come to our philosopher and they say, 'Your men of science have routed our priests and have silenced our old teachers. What religious faith do you give us in its place?' And the philosopher replies (his full heart bleeding for them), and he says, 'Think of the Unknowable!' The same objection is open to Comte's religion of humanity. It is no consolation in the hour of death to think of the Impersonal Humanity."

George Eliot never wholly rid herself of the vital truths of her early religious training. In her earlier revulsion, which was very radical, she was conscious of the hollowness and insufficiency of infidelity, and said, "It is the quackery of infidelity to suppose that it has a nostrum for all mankind, and to say to all and singular, 'Swallow my opinions, and you shall be whole.' " A little further on in life, while in the heyday of her unbelief, she wrote to Miss Hennel that she should like to work out a paper "on the superiority of the consolations of philosophy to those of so-called religion." Still later she distrusted this substitute, and shrank from all attempts to unsettle the religious beliefs of

men. In a letter to Madame Bodichou, in 1862, she said :

“ Pray don't ever ask me again not to rob a man of his religious belief, as if you thought my mind tended to such robbery. I have too profound a conviction of the efficacy that lies in all sincere faith to have any negative propagandism in me. In fact, I have very little sympathy with freethinkers as a class, and have lost all interest in mere antagonism to religious doctrines.”

In the last part of her life *The Imitation of Christ* was one of her favorite books, and the Bible, also, was a part of her daily reading.

A story is told of Lepaux, a member of the French Directory, that with much thought and study he had invented a new religion, to be called “ Theophilanthropy,” a kind of organized Rousseauism, and that, being disappointed in its not being readily approved and adopted, he complained to Talleyrand of the difficulty he found in introducing it.

“ I am not surprised,” said Talleyrand, “ at the difficulty you find in your effort. It is no easy matter to introduce a new religion. But there is one thing I would advise you to do, and then perhaps you might succeed.”

“ What is it? what is it?” asked the other, with eagerness.

"It is this," said Talleyrand, "go and be crucified, then be buried, and then rise again on the third day, and then go on working miracles, raising the dead, and healing all manner of diseases, and casting out devils, and then it is possible that you might accomplish your end!" And the philosopher, crestfallen and confounded, went away silent.

Mhegard, professor of philosophy in the University of Copenhagen, was long an apostle of skepticism. In the introduction of the second edition of one of his works he makes a notable confession :

"The experience of life, its sufferings and griefs, have shaken my soul and have broken the foundation upon which I formerly thought I could build. Full of faith in the sufficiency of science, I thought to have found in it a sure refuge from all the contingencies of life. This illusion is vanished ; when the tempest came which plunged me in sorrow, the moorings, the cable of science, broke like thread. Then I seized upon the help which many before me have laid hold of. I sought and found peace in God. Since then I have certainly not abandoned science, but I have assigned to it another place in my life."

Heine, a distinguished writer of rare originality and force, a physician in Berlin, and well

known as a ribald skeptic, lost very heavily by the bankruptcy of a mercantile house. A friend, Hufeland, meeting him a few days after, expressed sympathy. Heine replied, "I had rather you had not reminded me of it; for, thank God, I have got over it." "How did you manage that?" rejoined Hufeland. Heine answered: "Well, I was unable to forget it; thought upon it night and day. All my money, earned so painfully, and lost in a moment! Even my poor innocent patients suffered, for my thoughts were wandering. My domestic pleasures vanished; my good wife, otherwise so cheerful, hung her head; we sat opposite each other at the table dumb and sad; our children, that had been full of joy, looked on with timid fear. I felt that this could not and must not continue. The money was gone, and with it we had lost our peace. I, poor worm of earth, unable to come out of this distress, took refuge with the Almighty. I hurried to my bedroom, closed the door behind, and fell on my knees to pray with my whole heart that strength and courage and joy and rest might be restored to me. Then I felt as if God had appeared to me and said, 'Thou art a poor minister's son, and I have blessed thee in thy calling, so that thou art now a famous man. For years I have suffered thee

to sport with the money thou hast lost. Have I not the keys of all thy treasures? And can I not far more than replace thy loss? Be again of good courage, and promise that thou wilt go joyfully back to thy calling.' And I promised, and wife and children were again cheerful, and I forgot the heaviness. I have got over it, and am once more happy with my God. Prayer has done this."

The late Dr. Tyng says: "I once called to visit a dying lady in Philadelphia. I had knelt often in prayer with her. Her husband was an atheist, an English atheist, a cold-hearted English atheist. There is no such being beside him on the face of the globe. That was her husband. On the day on which that sweet Christian woman died she put her hand under her pillow and took out a beautiful, well-worn, tear-moistened Bible. She called her husband, and he came, and she said, 'Do you know this little book?' And he answered, 'It is your Bible.' And she replied: 'It is my Bible; it has been everything to me; it has converted, strengthened, cheered, and saved me; now I am going to Him who gave it to me, and I shall want it no more; open your hands.' And she put it between his two hands and pressed them together about it. 'My dear husband, do you know what I am doing?' 'Yes, dear,

you are giving me your Bible.' 'No, darling, I am giving you your Bible, and God has sent me to give you this sweet book before I die. Now put it in your bosom. Will you keep it there? Will you read it, for me?' 'I will, my dear.'

"I placed," said Dr. Tyng, "this dear lady dead in the tomb behind my church. Perhaps three weeks afterward that husband came to my study, weeping profusely. 'O, my friend,' said he, 'my friend, I have found what she meant—it is my Bible, every word of it was written for me. I read it over night by night; I bless God it is my Bible. Will you take me into your church where she was?' 'With all my heart.' And that once proud, worldly, hostile man, hating this blessed Bible, came, with no arguments, with no objections, with no difficulties suggested, with no questions to unravel, but binding this word on his heart of memory and love. It was God's message of direct salvation to his soul, as direct as if there was not another Bible in Philadelphia and an angel from heaven had brought him this."

Rev. J. M. Buckley, LL.D., in the *Christian Advocate*, May 30, 1895, says: "A few years ago we read a beautiful story, which we here reproduce:

"The following story is told of Littré, the

great French savant. Legouv  says that shortly after Littr 's daughter was born he (Littr ) said to his wife: "My dear, you are a good Christian. Bring up your daughter in the ways of religion and piety which you have always followed; but I must exact one condition, and that is that when she is fifteen years of age you will bring her to me. I will then explain my views to her, and she can choose for herself." The mother accepted the condition. Years rolled on, the fifteenth birthday of the child soon came, and the mother entered her husband's study. "You remember what you said to me, and what I promised," said she. "Your daughter is fifteen years old to-day. She is now ready to listen to you with all the respect and confidence due to the best of fathers. Shall I bring her in?" "Why, certainly," replied Littr . "But for what special reason? To explain to her my views? O no, my dear; no, no. You have made of her a good, affectionate, simple, straightforward, bright, and happy creature. Happy, yes; that is the word that in a pure being describes every virtue. And you fancy that I would cover all that happiness and purity with my ideas! Pshaw! my ideas are good enough for me. Who can say that they would be good for her? Who can say that they would not destroy or at least

damage your work? Bring her in, so that I may bless you in her presence for all that you have done for her, and so that she may love you more than ever."

" "I, too," added Legouv  , at the close of his little anecdote, "have around me believers whom I love, and I would consider myself a criminal if I troubled their religious convictions with my doubts and my objections, especially when I know that they find in those convictions nothing but joy, consolation, and virtue." "

Dr. Buckley adds the following attestation :

"Legouv   is a member of the French Academy, to which he was admitted in 1856. He was born February 14, 1807; is a famous author of novels, plays, and poems, and celebrated as a lecturer. Some of his plays had great popularity, the famous Rachel succeeding in one, and Ristori equally in an Italian version of another. He is the author of many very popular works.

"Maximilien Paul   mile Littr   was born in Paris, February 1, 1801; was a student of medicine, and a voluminous writer, becoming very conspicuous by a learned edition of Hippocrates in ten volumes. The first volume procured his admission to the Academy of Inscriptions. In politics he was an advocate

of democracy for France, and for twenty years was one of the writers for the *National*. After a few months' experience he withdrew once for all 'to his studious privacy.' In 1871 he was elected to the National Assembly, but he never spoke there. The greatest work he ever published was a magnificent *Dictionnaire de la Langage Française*; this he worked upon altogether thirty-one years. In religion he was a positivist, and translated Strauss's *Life of Christ*, which transforms the whole into myth. He is accredited with having caused the name of God and other religious details and references to be expunged from the ritual of the Masonic fraternity; and this expunction accounts in large part for the animosity of the Pope of Rome to Freemasonry.

"Many who read these words will remember the excitement produced when Littré, in June, 1873, was admitted to the French Academy. The Bishop of Orleans, the celebrated M. Dupanloup, protested against his admission by withdrawing from his seat in the Academy, which gave rise to an extensive discussion. Littré died in Paris June 2, 1881. He is said to have become a Catholic before he died, but on this we have no information.

"After reading that story many times—in fact, committing it to memory from the mere

repetition of the readings—we wondered whether it were true. In Legouvé we had felt considerable interest because of his work, *La Lectur en Action*, which has been of great use to us in many ways. As we were painfully translating it an edition appeared in English, published by a Philadelphia firm, under the title, *The Art of Reading*. The notes made the book exceedingly valuable, and the suggestions of Legouvé penetrated to the marrow of the subject.

“When Dr. Gibson, of France, was in this country, we asked him if Legouvé was still living. He said that he believed he was. After a delay of about a year, often recalling this story, we addressed him a note, of which the following is an English translation :

“*Dear Sir:* Pardon one who has read all that you have written that is translated into English if he asks you whether the inclosed is true. Many things that are floating about have no foundation, or are sufficiently distorted to make it necessary to have the authority of the person named in the narration before believing them. You will oblige me greatly if you will answer this question.’

“The following came in reply : ‘This history is absolutely correct.’

“Here are philosophic agnostics, the first,

learned to the last degree of an enormous brain capacity; the other, informed of the whole circle of fashionable life, art, and literature, and refined to the most exquisite point. They estimate the gospels as the source of joy, consolation, and virtue.

“Let this tribute be preserved to bring to shame or silence those who, as brute beasts, speak evil of the things they understand not.”

Such acknowledgments imply that Christianity is a living, vital power in the sorest emergencies of this life; that its Founder is not dead, but the living ascended Redeemer, of whom Renan, in one of his better moods, was constrained to exclaim, “Thy divinity is established. . . . A thousand times more living, a thousand times more loved, since thy death, than during thy pilgrimage here below, thou wilt become to such a degree the corner stone of humanity that to tear thy name from this world would be to shake it from its very foundations.”

So necessary is Jesus confessed to be to this world's essential life in its trying vicissitudes.

2. But the death season is the supreme ordeal of all human experiences. This transition period between the two worlds is universally regarded as the supreme testing time. Hence, in courts of justice great weight is attached to

declarations made by persons near death, due discrimination being made as to the mental condition of the departed.

Consider the tacit admissions of the truth of Christianity made by men of the world in allusions to departed friends. How often do biographers and friends of the dead labor to show that their departed friends were Christians! Hon. Daniel Webster, personally not a "professing Christian," in his eulogy upon that distinguished New England lawyer, Hon. Jeremiah Mason, dwelt with great satisfaction upon the fact that Mr. Mason was a Christian, and more than once stated that Mr. Mason kept up family worship for many years. Hon. Rufus Choate's biographer improved every opportunity to show that biblical religion occupied Mr. Choate's thoughts or was favorably regarded by him. After the death of the great Humboldt efforts were made to prove that he was a Christian, although in his famous book *Cosmos*, in which he surveyed the whole realm of nature, the name of God was mentioned in only two or three instances. The friends of Hon. Thomas Jefferson, who, at least in his earlier life, was a skeptic of the radical French school (and, if he changed his views at a later period, came to be only a humanitarian, a Socinian of a low type), since his death have striven hard

to make out that he was a Christian. His later writings have been closely searched, conversations with contemporaries carefully reproduced, reminiscences gleaned, and all the scattered straws gathered,* to make out the case. How often, as pastors of churches, do we meet cases of friends trying to make out that dear departed ones were Christians, though they had never professed to be Christians; some of them were profane, perhaps dissolute, and seldom attended upon public worship. Sometimes there has been gathered only a feeble straw of evidence, out of the last sickness, to make out the case. This has been industriously utilized.

Why all this? Why these desperate efforts to make it appear that departed friends were Christians? Why not let them and their record pass without attempting to enroll them as Christians? If there is no truth in Christianity, it is just as well to die outside of its fold as in it.

I will tell you why. There is a latent conviction that Christianity is true, and that to be a Christian improves a man's chances in the great hereafter. We have here a tacit acknowledgment that the Christian religion is a glorious reality, that Christianity alone can meet the deepest needs of the soul in that most important moment, when it is ushered into the pres-

* See *North American Review*, 1860, p. 115.

ence of Him who sits upon the highest throne of authority in the universe, before whose bar ultimate appeals and final destinies are decided.

Mr. Lecky, the distinguished philosophical and historical writer, of well-known freethinking habits, speaking of the triumphs of the evangelical movements generated under the Wesleys and Whitefield in the last century, says :

“ But the chief triumph of a religious movement is not to be found in its action upon large classes of the community, or within the noisy arena of politics. It is to be found rather in those spheres and moments of life which, beyond all others, are secluded from the eye of history. Every religion which is worthy of the name must provide some method of consoling men in the first agonies of bereavement, some support in the extremes of pain and sickness, above all, some stay in the hour of death. It must operate not merely or mainly upon the strong and healthy reason, but also in the twilight of the understanding, in the half-lucid intervals that precede death, when the imagination is enfeebled and discolored by disease, when all the faculties are confused and dislocated, when all the buoyancy and hopefulness of nature are crushed. At such a time it is not sufficient for most men to rest upon a review of a well-spent life. Such a retrospect to all of us is

too full of saddening and humiliating memories. It is an effort too great for the jaded mind. It can, at best, afford but a cold and languishing satisfaction amid the bitterness of death."

Then, after speaking of the influence of Roman Catholicism in such moments by an absolution, which is dependent upon "complete submission to sacerdotal claims"—"the most formidable engine of religious tyranny that has ever been employed to disturb or subjugate the world"—he proceeds:

"It is the glory of Protestantism, whenever it remains faithful to the spirit of its founders, that it has destroyed this engine. The evangelical teacher emphatically declares that the intervention of no human being, and of no human rite, is necessary in the hour of death. . . . The doctrine of justification by faith, which diverts the wandering mind from all painful and perplexing retrospect, concentrates the imagination on one sacred Figure, and persuades the sinner that the sins of a life have in a moment been effaced, has enabled thousands to encounter death with perfect calm, or even with vivid joy, and has consoled innumerable mourners at a time when all the commonplaces of philosophy would appear the idlest of sounds.

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“Historians, and even ecclesiastical historians, are too apt to regard men simply in classes, or communities, or corporations, and to forget that the keenest of our sufferings, as well as the deepest of our joys, take place in those periods when we are most isolated from the movements of society. Whatever may be thought of the truth of the doctrine, no candid man will question its power in the house of mourning and in the hour of death. ‘The world,’ wrote Wesley, ‘may not like our Methodists and evangelical people, but the world cannot deny that they die well.’”*

An impressive illustration of the truth I am discussing came to my personal knowledge. I had it from the lips of the man himself, an avowed atheist, who came to the bedside of a dear sister, almost gone with consumption. Taking him by the hand and pulling him down close to her, she asked, “Stephen, what can I do now?” Hesitating a moment, he replied, “Look to Jesus. He can save you.” I asked him how he, a boasting atheist, came to reply thus. He answered, “I was indeed a professed atheist, but somehow I felt there was nothing else she could do.”

* *England in the Eighteenth Century*, by W. E. H. Lecky (D. Appleton & Co., 1878), ii, pp. 664, 665.

So much in regard to the convictions of the living in regard to dying persons.

I come next to the confessions of dying persons themselves. It has come to be a well-accepted fact that many skeptics of various classes, in the near prospect of death, have renounced their unbelief and sought the benefits of Christianity.

Heine, to whose conversion I have referred, revised his literary productions, throwing out all aspersions upon the Christian religion. Before dying he said :

“When we lie on our deathbed we become very gentle and tender-hearted, and willingly make peace with God and man. I confess I have scratched many and bitten many, and have been no lamb. But since I have stood in need of God’s mercy I have made a truce with all my foes. Many beautiful poems which were directed against very high and very low persons are for that reason excluded from the present collection. Poems which contained in any degree personalities against Almighty God I have committed to the flames with the zeal of fear. It is better that the verses should burn than the versifier. Yes, I have made peace with the Creator as well as with the creature, to the great displeasure of my enlightened friends, who reproach me for my

relapse into the old superstition, as they are pleased to call my return to God. Others express themselves with still bitterer intolerance. Atheism's convocation has pronounced its anathema over me, and there are certain fanatical priests of unbelief who would willingly place me on the rack to make me renounce my heterodoxy. Happily they have no instruments of torture at their command except their writings. But I will confess everything without torture. I have really returned to God, like the prodigal son, after feeding swine with the Hegelians for many years. The divine homesickness came upon me and drove me forth, through woods and over vales, over the dizziest mountain pathways of dialectic. On my way I found the god of the pantheists, but I could make nothing of him."

The examples of Voltaire and Paine are familiar. That they relented from their infidelity before they died, although often disputed, is undoubtedly true, and that they alternately cursed and pleaded for mercy is also beyond successful dispute. I have been over and over the ground, and know well what Mr. Ingersoll and others have declared, but I believe that they came to the close of life as I have said; and this can be demonstrated as fully as that Hon. Alexander Hamilton was killed in a duel

with Aaron Burr, or that George Washington died peacefully in his own home.

“Some years ago an individual well known and highly respected in the religious world narrated in my hearing the following incident. In early life, while with a college companion he was making a tour on the Continent, at Paris, his friend was seized with an alarming illness. A physician of great celebrity was speedily summoned, who stated that the case was a critical one and that much would depend upon a minute attention to his directions. As there was no one at hand upon whom they could place much reliance, he was requested to recommend some confidential and experienced nurse. He mentioned one, but added, ‘You may think yourself happy indeed should you be able to secure her services; but she is so much in request among the higher circles here that there is little chance of finding her disengaged.’ The narrator at once ordered his carriage, went to her residence, and much to his satisfaction found her at home. He briefly stated his errand and requested her immediate attendance. ‘But before I consent to accompany you, permit me, sir,’ said she, ‘to ask you a single question. Is your friend a Christian?’ ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘he is indeed a Christian in the best and highest sense of the term; a man who

lives in the fear of God. But I should like to know the reason of your inquiry?' 'Sir,' she answered, 'I was the nurse that attended Voltaire in his last sickness, and for all the wealth of Europe I would never see another infidel die.' " *

To a lady distressed with a dread of dying Voltaire once wrote: "All things considered, I am of opinion that one ought never to think of death. This thought is of no use whatever, save to embitter life. Death is a mere nothing. Those people who solemnly proclaim it are the enemies of the human race; one must endeavor always to keep them off."

Voltaire's physician left this testimony: "It was my lot that this man should die under my hands. . . . As soon as he saw that all the means he had employed to increase his strength had just the opposite effect, death was constantly before his eyes. From this moment madness took possession of his soul. Think of the ravings of Orestes. He expired under the torments of the Furies."

It has become a familiar fact that General Ethan Allen, one of the bold skeptics of about a century ago, had a Christian wife. When his daughter, whom he idolized, came to die,

* Ford's *Damascus*.

turning to him her languid eyes, she asked, "Father, in whose faith would you have me die?" He staggered a moment and replied, "In your mother's faith." Allen then spoke out of his deeper consciousness, beyond the realm of speculation and controversy. How many, in all ages, like the apostate Balaam, have exclaimed, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

A woman who had been a prominent lecturer on infidelity came to her dying pillow. Being much disturbed in her mind, her friends gathered around and exhorted her to "hold on to the last." "Yes," she replied, "I have no objection to holding on; but will you tell me what I am to hold on to?" An infidel, standing by, was so affected that he renounced his infidelity. How many skeptics, finding nothing to hold on to, have turned to the Lord Jesus Christ!

A business man, when pressed by his pastor on the subject of personal religion, coldly replied, "I am interested in all religious matters; I have thought the matter over, and have come deliberately to the decision that I have no personal need of Jesus Christ, in the sense in which you preach." Just two weeks after he was taken suddenly and seriously ill. No one was permitted to speak to him until within an hour of death, when the sick man in a mel-

ancholy whisper exclaimed, "Who will carry me over the river?" *

When men come to die they feel the need of the divine Redeemer to bear them over the river, or as the Daysman to stand between them and the Most High, when they shall appear before the tribunal of heaven.

A skeptic once said, "There is one thing that mars all the pleasures of my life." "What is that?" inquired a friend. He responded, "I am afraid the Bible is true. If I could know for certain that death is an eternal sleep I should be happy; but the fear that the Bible is true is the thorn that pierces my soul, for if the Bible is true I am lost forever."

In this discussion I am not at liberty to produce witnesses from our side; and yet I may be allowed to throw in an inquiry, as a challenge.

What do you think of the remark of Hannah More, that no one ever repented of Christianity on his deathbed? A fact which, she said, "offsets all the wit and argument of infidelity."

I throw out the challenge, who ever knew a Christian, on his deathbed, giving up Christianity, and taking refuge in any form of infidelity or philosophy or paganism?

But is it objected that some skeptics persist

* Rev. C. S. Robinson, D.D., in the *Sunday School Times*.

in maintaining their views to the last and die calmly? Yes; and I have no disposition to disguise the fact. Let me cite the example of Rousseau. He died with a most impious appeal to the divine Being upon his lips. "Ah! my dear," he said, "how happy a thing it is to die when one has no reason for remorse or self-reproach!" Then, addressing the Almighty, he said, "Eternal Being, the soul that I am going to give thee back is as pure at this moment as it was when it proceeded from thee; make it a partaker of thy felicity."

Do you ask how I account for such a death? Look at his life, as related by himself in his autobiography, and then you can account for it.

Early in life he was apprenticed to an artist. During his apprenticeship he frequently stole from his master, as well as other persons. Before his time expired he fled to Sardinia and turned Catholic. Then he became a footman, in which capacity he followed his old practice of stealing. Detected with stolen goods, he managed to have his theft charged upon a servant girl, and she was driven from her place in disgrace. His debaucheries were many and very disgusting, in which the most sacred relations of life were wantonly outraged. You could not endure their recital. At last he

married, had a family of children, and for fear they should want after his death he sent them to the almshouse in his own lifetime.

And yet this vile man, after such a life, had the hardihood to say, "No man can come to the throne of God and say, 'I am a better man than Rousseau.'"

You do not wonder that a man so devoid of conscience should die such a death. May I not cite, as a universal fact, and a matter of common acknowledgment, that there is a law of hardening, in both the material and the moral worlds; and that in the moral realm the phenomena of this hardening are moral obtuseness, a paralysis of the moral feelings, a state whose very calmness is awful, fittingly described by St. Paul in those pregnant words, "past feeling?"

Are not men often calm at death because they are in a drowsy, comatose state? May not men be either physically or spiritually comatose, or both? Does mere calmness in death, then, meet the test? What virtue can there be in dying stupidly, like the swine?

Does some one cite the calm deaths of pagan devotees, the victims of the old funeral pyre and the Juggernaut? But is there a spirit of triumph in their deaths? Is there not a type of dying peculiar to Christianity, full of hope

and ofttimes of holy triumph? Can you find it in connection with any other religion?

It is not stupid, but intelligent, farseeing, joyful. How unlike the death scenes of Hindu devotees, who, under the rigorous demands of a system they dare not resist, cast themselves into the Ganges, or in former days under the Juggernaut! How unlike the Hindu widow, who, rather than endure a social ostracism that is worse than death, ascends the funeral pyre! These devotees blindly devote themselves to death in the spirit of despair, not unlike the suicides we are familiar with. There is no moral grandeur in such deaths, no spiritual hope, no singing in triumph. Christianity is the only religion whose adherents triumph in death, singing, "I'll praise my Maker," etc.

The spiritual attitude of a skeptic at death is an interesting study. Courtlandt Palmer, of New York city, well known as a radical skeptic, two days before death thus wrote to a friend: "I suffer no fear in the presence of what Christians call the King of Terrors." That is the whole of it, "no fear." There is no hope, no triumph, no victory. The bravest unbeliever dies with set teeth and clinched hands, daring the unknown. He has nothing to hope for. His best is extinction of being.

How absurd for an intelligent being to die

thus, in what may be characterized as an abnormal or an excentric, if not a fungus, state ! Death is such a prodigious reality, so marked in human experience, that, as a matter of good taste merely, no man can decently pass through it without being solemnly affected. A defiant, fearless attitude about the hereafter, if not sheer pretense, is at least in the highest degree irrational. What may be after death is too grave a matter to be dismissed with a sneer. Every soul wants an affirmative faith, such as many skeptics have confessed that Christianity imparts.

Does some one say, the ecstasies and exhilaration of dying Christians are often caused by stimulating medicines ?

Do physicians have one medicine for Christians and another for unbelievers ? If it is all in the medicine, why does not the medicine which you say produces exhilaration, joy, and spiritual triumph in Christians produce similar experiences in unbelievers when they come to die ? If this is so, then some druggist, making a mistake, as they sometimes do, may put up the medicine intended for a dying Christian and send it to a dying skeptic, and we will have a blatant infidel in death singing, "Glory, Hallelujah !" And all because the druggist made a mistake in putting up the medicine !

Is not this a legitimate answer? I desire no *ad captandum* advantage. We are dealing with serious matters, and we want to know only the truth.

Or, does some one say it is only a natural faith that sustains the Christian—the fact that he believes certain things in respect to the future makes them real to him, so that he launches off in death sustained by this assurance, and that this faith implies no supernatural element? And do you cite examples of great natural faith—Columbus's faith in the existence of a western continent, sustaining when his companions on the voyage faltered and trembled? And Napoleon Bonaparte's faith in his destiny, which kept him calm amid the terrible charges of the battlefield?

Is it, indeed, a merely natural faith that sustains the Christian? Why, then, does not the infidel's faith, that there is no hereafter, sustain him and make him joyful and victorious in death? I will tell you. It makes all the difference in the world what a man's faith takes hold upon. If it takes hold upon merely the shifting sands of conjecture, negation, and doubt, it is sure to fail, for it has no certitude. Negative theories cannot meet the needs of the soul.

But the Christian's faith, even by the ad-

mission of unbelievers, does sustain him, taking hold upon something real, solid, and satisfying. Thus has been conceded the last point in the argument, the vital point, demonstrating that Christianity is neither a sham nor a delusion, but a glorious, living, eternal reality, the Rock of Ages.

Inferences.

CHAPTER VII.

INFERENCES.

FROM the foregoing acknowledgments it is evident :

1. That man possesses a moral nature.
 2. That man's moral nature has its necessities and its demands.
 3. The existence of a demand in any department of nature implies the existence of a corresponding supply.
 4. But unbelief in none of its forms satisfies the needs of man's spiritual nature.
 5. The Christian religion, even our enemies being the judges, does meet these spiritual necessities.
 6. Only the Author of the human soul can know its constitution and its needs and provide a satisfying supply.
 7. Hence the Author of nature and the Author of Christianity are one and the same God.
- From the preceding discussion we see the weakness and folly of infidelity and the strength and blessedness of Christianity.
- We have no reason to be ashamed of Chris-

tianity or to fear it will ever be superseded. A religion that so satisfies the human soul will always be in demand.

A religion that confers such unspeakable blessings upon humanity is worth all the sacrifices and efforts that can be put forth for its dissemination throughout the world. We have nothing too good to give to God for the upbuilding of his everlasting kingdom.

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